CAN A PRO-WAR DEMOCRAT SURVIVE IOWA?

RYAN LIZZA

CAN LITERATURE BE SIMPLE?

JAMES WOOD

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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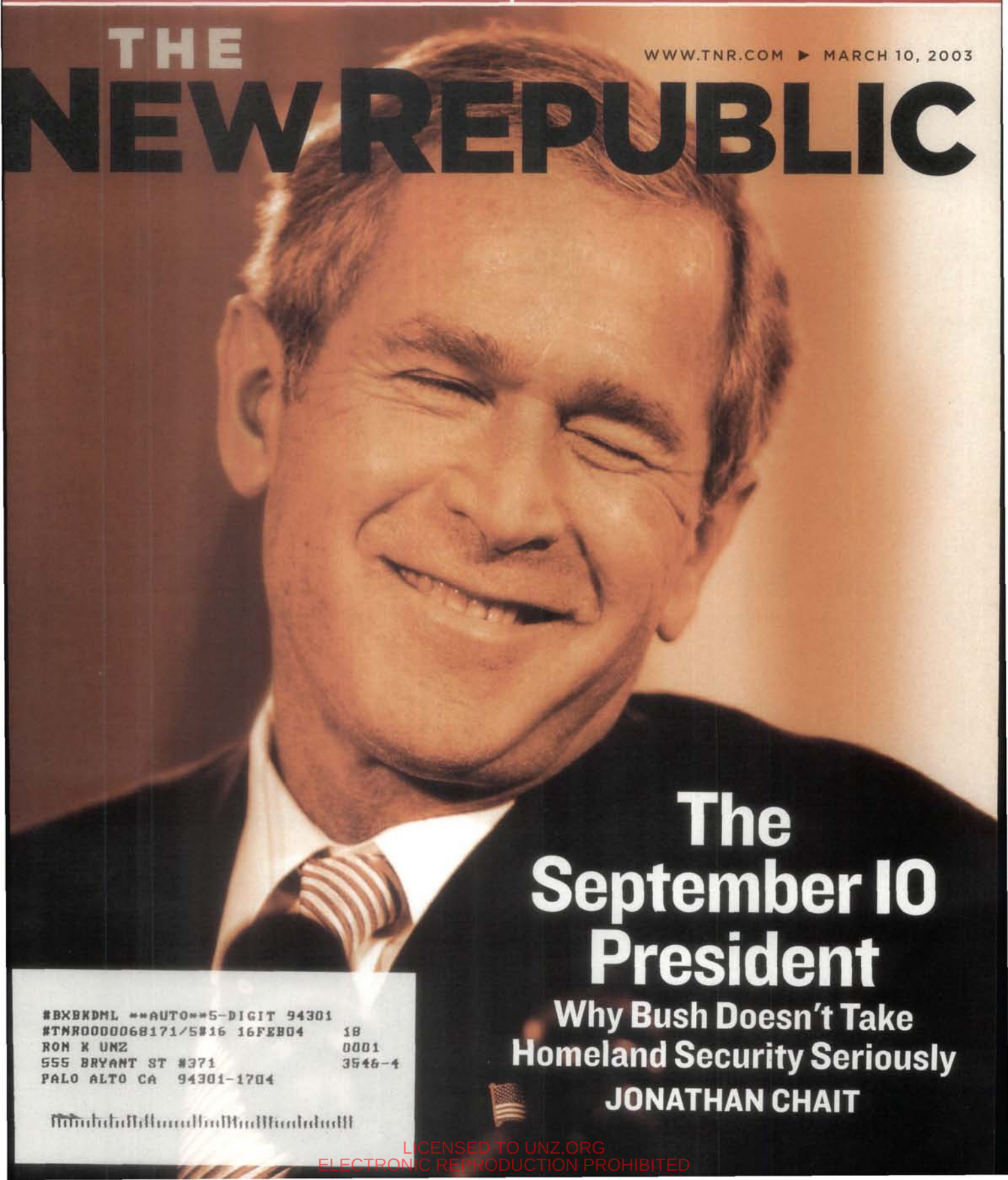

The September 10 President

Why Bush Doesn't Take Homeland Security Seriously

JONATHAN CHAIT

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

MARCH 10, 2003 WASHINGTON, D.C. ISSUE 4,599 VOLUME 228

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Jonathan Chait **18** **THE 9/10 PRESIDENT** George W. Bush says homeland security is his "highest priority." But, by clinging to his pre–September 11 priorities, he has shortchanged virtually every important program that could make Americans more safe. Why doesn't anyone care?

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CORRESPONDENCE

CROWD CONTROL

THE ABSENCE OF CREDIBLE ATTENdance estimates for marches and rallies is a problem for those who want to assess the strength of various movements ("Count Down," by Noam Scheiber, February 3). As careful news reporting would have made clear, the "official" numbers and the organizers' counts at recent antiwar marches have varied dramatically—mostly because the "officials" were not counting the whole crowd. According to the Associated Press, police estimated that 30,000 people marched from the National Mall to the Navy Yard, while the organizers' estimate of 500,000 referred to the much larger crowd gathered on the Mall. In San Francisco, antiwar organizers claimed 200,000 in the march down Market Street, yet police counted 55,000 in the rally at the Civic Center. That seems like a huge discrepancy, but police—acknowledging that they had not counted the huge crowds outside the Civic Center plaza—later upped their estimate of total participants to 150,000. March organizers counted marchers moving past a checkpoint on Market Street; police used aerial photography. The eventual convergence of estimates indicates that reasonable estimates are possible. It also indicates that the organizers were attempting an accurate count, not making wild claims.

It would help if news media and commentators would report which section of a protest is being counted, which crowds are being omitted, and how such estimates are made. Responsible reporters should attempt to address the discrepancy and assess the accuracy of the estimates, not simply throw up their hands and claim bias on all sides.

RACHEL FINDLEY
Berkeley, California

MAJORITY RULE

ONE POINT SADLY MISSED IN Jonathan Chait's analysis is the demographic makeup of those eligible for affirmative action ("Pol Tested," February 3). Among those eligible under the many programs are women (who make up more than half of the population) and such obscure groups as Aleuts and South Pacific Islanders. In fact, perhaps 70 percent of the population is eligible. The only people who fail to qualify are white males of European descent who are not from Spain (who, according to the Census Bureau, would *qualify as Hispanic). It is not surprising* that most Americans reject racial discrimination of any kind. But the assumption that these programs mostly benefit African Americans is misleading. They are in the minority of those who are being affirmatively acted upon.

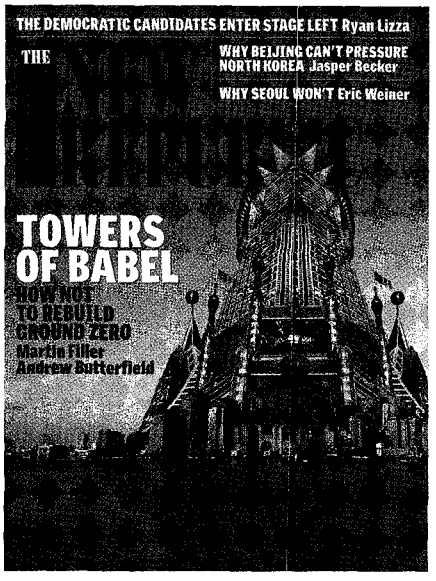
JOHN NEWTON
Fraser, Michigan

DOUBLE BLIND

PETER BEINART'S TRB "BLIND SPOT" posed an interesting question to opponents of racial and ethnic preferences in college admissions: Do you believe in color-blindness across the board (February 3)? It's a good question, and the answer is yes. But let's reframe the question for the defenders of race-based affirmative action: If you believe that racial considerations are valid and can be one factor among others in college admissions, will you endorse allowing race to be one factor among others in other policy areas? For instance, why can't race be one factor among others in selecting jurors to hear a capital murder trial? Or during the sentencing phase of a criminal trial? How about police profiling to prevent crime? Can race be one factor among others that police consider when pulling over a suspicious driver? Can race be one factor among others used by life insurance underwriters in assessing the risk of a life insurance applicant? Finally, can race be just one reason among others for a restaurant owner to refuse service to a group of somewhat rowdy teenagers who happen to be black? The questions can go on and on. If the opponents of affirmative action can't have it both ways, neither can the defenders.

EDWARD BLUM
Director of Legal Affairs
American Civil Rights Institute
Washington, D.C.

BEINART'S DEFENSE OF AFFIRMative action reminds me of Michael


THE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES ENTER STAGE LEFT Ryan Lizza
THE
WHY BEIJING CAN'T PRESSURE NORTH KOREA Jasper Becker
WHY SEOUL WON'T Eric Weiner
TOWERS OF BABEL
HOW NOT TO REBUILD GROUND ZERO
Martin Filler
Andrew Butterfield

Moore's assertion that Al Gore is the legitimate president because he received more popular votes than George W. Bush. Beinart's argument makes sense only if one forgets rule of law. The 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. The law says nothing about being the child of an alumnus or about residing on the Upper Peninsula.

GOULD B. HAGLER JR.
Sandy Springs, Georgia

OPEN FORUM

THE IRRESPONSIBILITY OF THE Palestinian leadership and the anti-Semitic motivations of some who support the "Palestinian cause" do not mean that everyone who advocates more attention to the grievances of the Palestinian people is an anti-Semite, is indifferent to suicide bombing, or is "entranced" by the Palestinian cause ("Manqué," by Martin Peretz, February 3). Within Israel itself there is vigorous debate about what the right courses of action are. Because the conflict continues and endangers world peace and security, free public discussion must go on.

COLLEEN CLARK
Cambridge, Massachusetts ■

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Hot Button Issues

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Once Bitten

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION is good at punishing America's enemies. But it's far worse at rewarding America's friends. As Franklin Foer noted in these pages last year (see "Fabric Softener," March 4, 2002), the White House responded to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's crucial support against his former ally, the Taliban, by denying his request to lift U.S. tariffs on his country's textiles. More recently, it has ignored Hamid Karzai's pleas to extend international peacekeeping throughout Afghanistan. And it has stiffed Mexican President Vicente Fox's calls for a new immigration accord, embittering the pro-American president and undermining his domestic support.

Now comes the very public wrangling over America's desire to use Turkey as a launching pad for its war against Iraq. The Bush administration spent much of last week fuming at Ankara's efforts to extract more aid in return for those crossover rights than the White House had wanted to dish out. According to the *Times* of London, unnamed American officials likened the negotiations to "a bazaar." The Cox News Service called them "a rug-trader's nightmare." *The Financial Times*, continuing the highly unfortunate metaphor, went with "carpetshop haggle." CNN wondered whether Turkey had become a "checkbook ally."

It's too bad so few people in the U.S. media, let alone the U.S. government, stop to consider the possibility that maybe *America* isn't the most reliable ally. Consider the view from Ankara. In August of 1990, the first Bush administration asked permission to use U.S. bases in Turkey for Gulf war bombing raids. Polls at the time showed that more than 70 percent of Turks opposed the request. When Turkey's prime minister nonetheless agreed, his foreign minister, defense minister, and army chief of staff resigned in protest.

From Turkey's perspective, the war had two immediate effects. First, America's encouragement, and then betrayal, of the Kurdish uprising against Saddam Hussein sent 500,000 Kurds stampeding across the border into Turkey. Second, the war on its doorstep destroyed Turkey's $10 billion annual tourism industry. The Turkish economy, which grew by 9.5 percent in 1990, plummeted to 0.5 percent growth in 1991.

Things didn't get much better once the war ended. The postwar sanctions against Baghdad largely shut down Turkey's cross-border commerce with Iraq, once its largest trading partner. Two oil pipelines running from Iraq through Turkey to the Mediterranean Sea, which had provided Ankara with lucrative customs revenue, were shut down. Over the years, as Iraq's oil-for-food program expanded, some of that trade resumed. But impartial observers still put Ankara's economic losses from the war and sanctions in the tens of billions.

Not surprisingly, the Turkish government looked to Washington for help. In 1991, Ankara asked for $650 million in special postwar aid. West Virginia Democrat Robert Byrd, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, endorsed the request. But the Bush administration supported only $200 million. And that's the only supplemental funding from Washington that Ankara got. (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates promised assistance as well, but, according to Turkey, that money didn't fully come through either.) Ankara appealed to the Security Council to invoke a clause compensating third countries hurt by U.N. sanctions. But the United States didn't support Turkey's request, and it went nowhere. Today, one of the sticking points between Ankara and Washington is the Turks' demand for a written financial commitment, signed by President Bush. Can you blame them?

If the U.S. government and media haven't shown much sympathy for the historic reasons for Ankara's skepticism toward another Gulf war aid deal, they've shown equally little understanding about a second factor inhibiting Ankara's enthusiasm: democracy. In Turkey, according to recent polls, more than 90 percent of the public opposes war with Iraq. So do both major parties in parliament. The Turkish ambassador to the United States recently said that, by backing such an invasion, his country's newly elected Prime Minister Abdullah Gul "is really taking the risk of his political life." (Gul's government is also a major participant in the international peacekeeping force in Afghanistan—giving that effort a crucial Muslim imprimatur.)

Given the Bush administration's oft-stated desire to bring democracy to Iraq, you might think it would be sensitive to such democratic niceties. You'd be wrong. Instead, the Bush administration last week parked about twelve military cargo ships near the Turkish coast and informed Gul that he had a couple of days to agree to a deal and push it through parliament. At America's behest, Turkey's Cabinet approved the agreement before it was even completed. This Monday, a Turkish official told *The New York Times*, "The government was not satisfied with the agreement, but due to pressure, pressure from the United States, it decided to forward it to parliament." As of this writing, then, the Turkish parliament is about to vote on a deal that virtually everyone in the country opposes and whose details have not even been determined. It is in this environment that Gul has tried to bargain the Bush administration up from its offer of between $4 billion and $6 billion in grants to $10 billion—a demand that has won Ankara the epithet "checkbook ally."

To be sure, not all of Turkey's demands are benign. Ankara wants to ensure that war does not produce a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq that could serve as an inspiration to Turkey's own disaffected, secessionist Kurds. And, to do that, it has received Washington's permission to send its own troops across the border along with America's. That deployment sets the stage for a humanitarian crisis, as Kurds, fleeing war, run smack into the Turkish army. It may also signal Turkey's long-term desire to meddle in a post-Saddam Iraq, which could invite similar destabilizing mischief from Iran and Syria.

But it's not Ankara's political demands that have spurred outrage in Washington; it's its economic ones. (Democrats have gleefully attacked the White House for promising aid to Turkey but not to America's governors.) American commentators seem to assume that governments like Turkey's will support war with Iraq despite the overwhelming objections of their people and despite the likely economic costs. If they ask for guarantees of assistance to cushion the political and financial blow, they are rug merchants and fair-weather friends. That, it seems, is America's current definition of a genuine ally. Which helps to explain why we look around the world and see so few.

PETER BEINART

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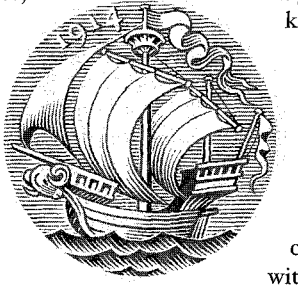
Ready or Not

WHAT DOES IT say about the Bush administration's war on terror that Tom Ridge's name has become a punch line? After Ridge veered wildly this month from too-scary doomsday rhetoric to too-glib jokes about plastic sheeting, David Letterman cracked that, "in case of a terrorist attack, bottled water and duct tape are not going to do a damn thing. So do what Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge does—get really drunk and pick up a hooker."

The Ready Campaign, Ridge's new effort to educate the public about how to handle a terrorist attack, seems designed mainly to reassure soccer moms and dads that their suburban nests can be preserved. Its black-and-white TV ads featuring firefighters, cops, and Ridge himself focus on preparing the "home" by stocking up on food, water, and radio batteries. But it's not homes we need to worry about most. According to counterterrorism experts and past history, terrorists target densely crowded urban areas—subways, office buildings, malls, and other places where people won't have flashlights and Poland Spring at hand.

And the Ready Campaign offers little useful advice for these more likely scenarios. The new Department of Homeland Security website, *Ready.gov*, suggests that, in the event of a nearby chemical attack, you should "[t]ake immediate action to get away" and then "[w]ash with soap," but it makes no mention of the *direction* you should move if such a chemical attack were to occur. As Michael Levi of the Federation of American Scientists notes, the critical point is to get upwind of a chemical release—"getting away" downwind is precisely the wrong thing to do. A page on high-rise buildings, meanwhile, suggests that we "take cover" and "listen for and follow instructions"—although the Ready Campaign never explains from whom these instructions will come and whether or not a clear emergency-communications plan even exists.

The same goes for the campaign's discussion of a radioactive "dirty bomb." According to counterterrorism experts, such a device isn't likely to kill many more people than a large, conventional bomb—greater harm might come from an ensuing mass panic. Academics have repeatedly urged the government to clear up the public misperception that a dirty bomb is similar to a nuke, so the public might react more rationally. But the *Ready.gov* site doesn't help on this score. It fails to explain that short-term, low doses of radiation are nearly harmless. Nor does it point out that any such bomb's danger zone is likely to be small—perhaps several blocks or a few miles. To the contrary, Levi notes, *Ready.gov* features a graphic showing a dirty-bomb radiation zone that covers one-third of Texas.



What's more, no advice at all is offered to people about how to avoid panicking and getting trampled, a potentially fatal consequence of a dirty bomb or other terrorist attack. (That's how most victims of the 1995 sarin terrorist attack on a Tokyo subway died.) The site contains no guidance on removing yourself from the middle of a crowd, walking to safety, taking extra care to maintain your footing, or other tactics crowd-control experts suggest regarding a mob scene.

Perhaps the most puzzling thing about Ridge's public information campaign is that much of the useful public information it omits is available elsewhere. Last year, the Israeli government distributed a citizens' pamphlet with tips on how to spot suicide bombers, informing the public to look for people wearing heavy coats in warm weather, which might conceal bombs strapped to their chests, or people perspiring feverishly in anticipation of setting off suicidal explosives. Israel also offered the public information on spotting car bombs—tips such as looking for cars parked in odd places or trunks seemingly weighed down with large amounts of material, which could be explosives.

Or consider the excellent website of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Strategies, filled with facts ignored by *Ready.gov*. Are safe rooms really necessary? (No, because wind, sunlight, and other obstacles to the dissemination of chemical and biological weapons make it unlikely that you would need to retreat to a safe room.) Is a gas mask a good idea? (No, many gas masks do not protect against biological and chemical weapons.) What kind of paper mask works best? (Try an N95.) Should I stock antibiotics? (No, because the general public does not know how to utilize antibiotics effectively and because antibiotics do not have to be taken immediately after an attack occurs.) Johns Hopkins even offers fact sheets on each of the major biological and chemical agents, with information about how to detect symptoms of each one and how to treat them. *Ready.gov*, meanwhile, offers such pabulum as, "Some biological agents can cause contagious diseases, others do not." Even a slapdash private Web outfit such as *howstuffworks.com* offers a far more sophisticated dirty-bomb discussion than *Ready.gov*. Perhaps someone should tell Tom Ridge about *Google*. ■

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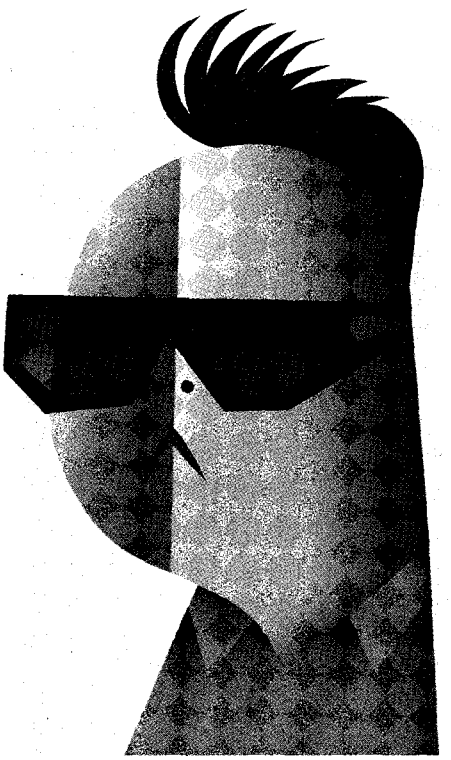
NOTEBOOK

KIM'S MISSILE . . . GEPHARDT'S MISSTEP . . . BYRD'S MISSION

A CRISIS BY ANY OTHER NAME

AFTER SPENDING FOUR DAYS IN Asia last week trying to recruit allies for his administration's North Korea policy, Secretary of State Colin Powell declared victory. "I've achieved what I wanted on the trip," Powell told reporters Tuesday after attending incoming South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun's inaugural in Seoul. The previous day, North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il had highlighted Powell's "achievement" by firing a missile into the Sea of Japan. While a lesser statesmen might allow such an event to undermine his message, Powell stuck to his guns. The missile was "old technology," he explained, and therefore "a fairly innocuous kind of test." So give Powell credit: The administration's policy *is* working. But that's because the policy is to stall, ignoring North Korea's escalating hostility while the White House focuses on Iraq.

The problem with stalling, of course, is that it only makes sense if the situation on the Korean peninsula seems likely to improve or at least not deteriorate. But it doesn't. In recent weeks, Kim Jong Il has steadily ratcheted up the crisis, sending fighter planes into South Korean airspace, announcing the restart of his plutonium facility at Yongbyon, and now launching the missile. All of which is why others in the region found Kim Jong Il's latest provocation decidedly less innocuous than Powell. Seoul's stock market plummeted 3.9 percent once word of the test got out; markets in Taiwan, Japan, and Australia soon followed suit. Meanwhile, a foreign policy adviser to Roh Moo Hyun announced, "If the American policy is simply to wait for North Korea to make a huge mistake, there is no future for the alliance and no future for the American position in East Asia." The administration's lack of clear policy undermined Powell's mission as well: Despite his upbeat assessment, the secretary of state failed to convince Beijing, Tokyo, or Seoul to support either U.N.-backed sanctions on Pyongyang or concerted diplomacy aimed at quashing the North's pursuit of nuclear weapons.



Kim Jong Il

Yet, even as the markets tanked and some in Asia worried about a second Korean War, the Bush administration worried mostly about—semantics. American officials, *USA Today* reported this week, are still trying to avoid using the word "crisis" to describe North Korea's escalating threats. Appearing before a House committee, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly said, "When you have a crisis, that suggests something needs to be done almost immediately." Exactly.

UNION DON'TS

UNDOUBTEDLY, THE DEMOCRATIC candidate who helped himself the most at last weekend's Democratic National Committee cattle call in Washington was Dick Gephardt. It's not just because Gephardt gave a passionate speech containing more policy substance than any of his rivals but also because expectations, especially among Beltway denizens a little weary of the 26-year congressman, were so low. But Gephardt's revival probably reinforces the conventional wisdom that he must win the Iowa caucuses to remain a viable candidate. And, in Iowa these days, Gephardt-watchers—especially those in the labor movement, the crucial source of his support in the state—are still buzzing about the congressman's role in a local spat during the last election.

Jim Nussle, who represents Iowa's first district, was considered one of the most vulnerable Republicans in 2002. In the Democratic primary, David Nagle, a leading Iowa liberal and a stalwart labor ally, faced Ann Hutchinson, a lifelong Republican who switched her party registration just before jumping into the race. Liberals in the state strongly backed Nagle, and the membership of the Iowa Federation of Labor (IFL) backed him by a 62 percent vote, just short of the two-thirds majority needed for a formal endorsement. Democrats in Washington, however, rallied around the presumably more electable Hutchinson, as did two key Iowa unions, the United Auto Workers and the United Food and Commercial Workers. At the end of the primary, when it looked as though Nagle would beat Hutchinson, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) dumped money into the race to help her pull it off—one of the only primaries in the country where it intervened so aggressively. (Hutchinson went on to lose to Nussle in the general election anyway.)

Now, some Iowa liberals and labor leaders blame Gephardt, who they say rejected their pleas to stay out of the race. "People made calls to Gephardt, and he said it's not him, it's [DCCC head] Nita Lowey," says IFL President Mark Smith, perhaps the most important labor leader in the state. "People said, 'That's nonsense. It's Gephardt getting involved in our politics.'" Smith continues: "Is it old

DAVID COWLES

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news, water over the dam? Maybe. But do little things like that matter? Sure. People might say to hell with him and the horse he rode in on."

WHEN DOVES CRY

AFTER THE DRUBBING THEY SUFfered in the 2002 midterm elections, many Democrats understood that, even if they would never support George W. Bush's foreign policy, they at least had to be smarter about how they discussed it. But evidently you can't teach some of the party's old dogs new tricks. To wit, the continued push by Senators Robert Byrd and Ted Kennedy for another congressional vote on the war with Iraq.

Byrd and Kennedy complain that there hasn't been enough "debate" about a war—as if the country hasn't been talking about it nonstop since last summer. So, working in tandem, the long-winded gray-hairs have been pushing two new resolutions: Kennedy's would resolve, somewhat comically, that Bush must seek another resolution before going to war; Byrd's would urge Bush to win U.N. sanction for any attack. Substantively, both measures are ridiculous: After all, the Senate voted 77 to 23 in October to give Bush the authority for a unilateral attack. Politically, they're even worse. Even in their best-case scenario, Byrd and Kennedy would win a small handful of new antiwar votes, while more than two-thirds of the Senate would reaffirm Bush's war mandate. Not only would such a vote do nothing to avert a war, it would make it appear that the Democratic Party was trying to undermine the president on the eve of conflict—a position that would make it even more difficult than it already is for Democrats to influence foreign policy once the war is over. Which is presumably why even leading Senate Democratic critics of the war—including Carl Levin and Dick Durbin—oppose Byrd and Kennedy's folly. Describing Bush's war plans on the Senate floor last month, Byrd explained, "Our challenge is to now find a graceful way out of a box of our own making." Pity he wasn't talking about himself and Kennedy.

HOME NEWS

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MAGAZINE'S redesign, we are pleased to announce a new way to read THE NEW REPUBLIC in the most timely manner possible. Beginning this week, our website, *www.tnr.com*, offers the full text of the magazine to subscribers on the Friday morning after we go to press—days before it usually arrives in mailboxes and on newsstands. Readers can even download the entire magazine, fully formatted, as a PDF file to be printed out at home for reading over the weekend. Current subscribers need only register once at the website; online-only subscriptions are also available. ■

Inside the Box | Bruce Reed

LEAGUE OF NATIONS Chirac goes all-out to block Security Council resolution: "If we let the U.N. act now, it will never be able to make hollow threats again."

WAR BUCKS U.S. rents Turkey for $6 billion. White House excuse: "At least we have a plan to grow someone's economy."

HEAD FAKE Code Orange alert was based partly on info fabricated by terrorists. Fleischer's excuse: "And you thought we made it all up ourselves."

EIGHT IS ENOUGH Moseley-Braun, Kucinich swell Dem field to eight. Best explanation: "No one else is hiring!"

THINKING SMALLEY Liberals beg Al Franken to start talk radio network. Democrats' new motto: "I'm good enough. I'm smart enough. And doggone it, people like me!"

TWOFER European Union considers plan to have two presidents: "We call it the Bush-Cheney model."

DUCT HUNTING Ridge launches ad campaign to prepare public for terrorist attacks. New slogan: "Got Panic?"

BLANK SLATES Democrats ask Republicans for more information on Estrada: "Stop wasting precious time you could use to make us obstruct something else."

FLEISCHER: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE; FRANKEN: KRT

Latest AIDS statistics:
40,000,000 infected.

00,000,000
CURED.

We've bought time.
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AIDS RESEARCH

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Bush's anti-Edwards strategy.

Tar Pit

BY JASON ZENGERLE

JOHN KERRY MAY have rushed to the head of the Democratic presidential pack. But, according to many White House observers, it's the other John—former trial lawyer and current North Carolina Senator John Edwards—whose candidacy keeps Karl Rove awake at night. Which is undoubtedly why President Bush is making such an issue out of medical malpractice lawsuits these days. Although Bush has been an outspoken supporter of tort reform ever since his days as governor of Texas, he seems to have recently developed a particular distaste for the exact type of lawsuits on which Edwards built his legal career. As one White House official conceded to the Associated Press last month, a Bush speech calling for limits on medical malpractice suits had been part of a "whack John Edwards day."

And now the White House may have come up with an even more effective way to whack Edwards. It has tapped Republican Representative Richard Burr to run for Edwards's Senate seat next year. For the last few years, North Carolina Republicans have been touting Burr as their version of Edwards: a photogenic, forty-something pol who's more reflective of the state's booming metropolitan areas than its shrinking rural ones. Indeed, many Republicans expected Burr, now in his fifth term in the House, to run for the Senate last year after Jesse Helms announced his retirement. But, when Elizabeth Dole entered the picture, Burr took a pass and set his sights on 2004.

The White House has been looking at 2004, too. After discussions with White House political director Ken Mehlman, Burr announced earlier this month that he was establishing a Senate campaign exploratory committee—and that he was doing so with Bush's support. "The White House has expressed a great deal of interest in the North Carolina Senate race this time," Burr says. "I think the White House has already committed whatever they can bring to this Senate race, because it's important to them." Burr has started raising money for his Senate bid and hopes to have $3.5 to $4 million on hand by the end of the year. "Typically, we wouldn't be talking about 2004 in February a year before," Burr says. "But I think the difference now is that John Edwards is running for president. . . . And that automatically puts the Senate seat in North Carolina in the spotlight."

Indeed it does. And, as one Democratic strategist notes, the apparent White House plan is to "squeeze Edwards tight, squeeze him every inch with Burr." The early backing of Burr—the White House's first public support for any 2004 candidate—all but anoints him as the de facto GOP nominee. And this makes life difficult for Edwards in two ways.

First, it makes it harder for Edwards to tack left during the Democratic primaries: Even as he bashes Bush while stumping for primary votes in Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina, Edwards will be forced to guard his right flank more carefully back home—lest Burr paint him as a liberal out of step with North Carolina values. This conundrum was never more evident than in the days immediately preceding and following Burr's Senate announcement. A couple of days before Burr got into the race, Edwards, campaigning in South Carolina, blasted Bush for siding with big business over the interests of everyday Americans. "We still believe, in America, that the son of a mill worker can beat the son of a president," Edwards said. The day after Burr's announcement, however, the Edwards team was tacking back to the center for North Carolina general-election voters. Edwards pollster Harrison Hickman touted his candidate's support of Bush's efforts on homeland security and the war with Iraq to *The Charlotte Observer*, adding, "[O]ther than tax breaks for the richest one percent, I don't know that there's any major issue" where Burr is more supportive of Bush than Edwards. Quotes like that could serve quite nicely in negative ads against Edwards by his Democratic primary opponents.

Conversely, Edwards's presidential campaign gives Burr a tremendous opening in the Senate race. While Edwards is leading Burr by 18 points in the latest poll, his general reelect number is a surprisingly low 41 percent. ("Any time an incumbent is below fifty percent, that's a sign of trouble," says Ferrel Guillory, the director of the University of North Carolina's Program on Southern Politics, Media, and Public Life.) North Carolina Republicans are trying hard to portray Edwards as someone who is pursuing the White House at the expense of his home state. The presidency "has been an ambition of his since the day he was sworn in [to the Senate]," Burr says of Edwards, "and North Carolina is the loser in that. We have a long history of great representation in the U.S. Senate by people like Sam Ervin and Senator Helms, who are willing to serve a large chunk of time, who see more benefit for the state in having a good U.S. senator rather than a presidential candidate." This line of attack seems to be striking a chord: 48 percent of North Carolinians recently surveyed by Raleigh's *The News & Observer* disapproved of Edwards's presidential aspirations, while only 42 percent supported them.

Second, and most importantly, Burr's early start could force Edwards to make a final decision between running for president and running for reelection earlier than he had originally intended. Edwards's aides maintain that he has no deadline for making this decision. "He's in the process of deciding," says Edwards campaign spokesperson Jennifer Palmieri. "I can't really put a time frame on it." But those around Edwards have suggested that he could wait until North Carolina's filing deadline for federal elections—which comes at the end of next February—to make up his mind. That, of course, would allow Edwards to see how he fared in the early presidential primaries before deciding about the Senate. "In 1988, Dick Gephardt ran for president and stayed in the race until Super Tuesday, and then, when it looked like he wasn't going to win, he went back to St. Louis and filed for the House race," says Edwards's campaign chairman, Ed Turlington. "There is that parallel."

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But, with Burr off and running, there seems to be a growing sense among North Carolina Democrats that Edwards needs to make up his mind sooner than that, maybe even as early as this Labor Day. "If you're going to give somebody a chance in this race, you need to give him enough time," says one North Carolina Democrat. "Having Burr getting in with the resources he has available to him and his apparent commitment from the White House makes it all the more important for Democrats to have the time to raise the money, to strategize, and to get ready. It compresses [Edwards's] time frame and increases his responsibility to the party." Even a North Carolina Democrat like Erskine Bowles—who, after running unsuccessfully against Dole, has good name recognition and a campaign team he can quickly reassemble—would be hurt by a truncated race. "For Bowles to get a late start and to allow Burr to pick up business money—and Burr would be able to pick up business money against John Edwards that he wouldn't against Bowles—that would be a problem," says one Democratic strategist. And, while none of these Democrats are actively pressuring Edwards—"I think he needs to decide by September," says one prominent North Carolina Democrat, "but don't quote me on that"—the pressure will probably come if it looks like Edwards is going to try to wait until February.

All of which might not seem like that big a deal, except that if Edwards does decide not to run for the Senate and then fails to win his party's presidential nomination or the number-two spot on the ticket, he could quickly wind up a politician without an office. At that point, the next North Carolina gubernatorial race wouldn't be until 2008, the same year Dole's Senate seat comes up for reelection. In other words, John Edwards would have nothing to run for. And, when the next presidential race comes along, the man who right now is one of the Democratic Party's rising stars might have already come and gone. ■

Gaza City Dispatch

Yesterday's Man

BY HASSAN NOURI

LESS THAN A MILE from Yasir Arafat's demolished police compound in Gaza City, Farad Madabeh and Mohammad Abdel-Kareem sat one day last month in Madabeh's pool hall staring at a poster of Saddam Hussein. Madabeh found the poster—essentially an enlargement of the Iraqi dinar—in a garbage pile a couple of years ago and has hung it on the wall of his establishment ever since. Sometimes, he even carries it with him in demonstrations against the Israeli occupation.

"Not one person prays today without praying for Saddam," insists 28-year-old Madabeh. "I love Saddam because he has stood with us." But not many here still agree. Amid the posters of fallen Palestinian militants, Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) leaders, and Hamas luminaries, Saddam's visage is like a dusty vinyl record—cool, but so yesterday. Whatever cult of personality he once enjoyed among Palestinians—in 1991, pictures of the Iraqi leader were common in Palestinian homes—has been all but supplanted by the intifada's homegrown "martyrs" in Gaza and in the West Bank. And, even as Palestinians bemoan George W. Bush's plan to strike Iraq, most are careful to extend their sympathies to the Iraqi people, not to Saddam himself.

Twelve years ago, Palestinians proved Saddam's most avid backers. Not long after Saddam invaded Kuwait in 1990, Arafat traveled to Iraq and declared his heartfelt support. Many in Gaza still recount their elation over Saddam's Scud strikes against the Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Gan—home to the largest concentration of Jewish Iraqis in Israel. Palestinians proudly professed their support for Saddam, held rallies, and hung pro-Saddam posters on the streets. Saddam's detractors were dismissed as unpatriotic, his critics as opportunists.

These days, Madabeh and like-minded Palestinians remind their compatriots that Saddam has been one of the few Arab rulers to materially assist the Palestinians during this second intifada. Saddam has showered his largesse on Palestinian "martyrs" killed since the fighting began in October 2000, shelling out $10,000 for any family that has lost a child in the fighting and $25,000 for families of suicide bombers no matter which faction they belong to—Hamas, Islamic Jihad, or the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade. There's even a fund to reimburse families whose homes have been demolished by the Israelis. All in all, Saddam has disbursed some $32 million to Palestinian families since the start of the intifada, in addition to providing them with medical help and scholarships.

With that kind of backing, you might expect a groundswell of support for Saddam in the current conflict with the United States. A handful of pro-Iraq marches have indeed taken place in Ramallah and in Gaza City. But Palestinian support for Saddam is today more the exception than the rule, having eroded significantly over the last decade. Even the virulently anti-American Hamas, eager to see an Islamic state in Iraq, no longer supports Saddam as strongly as it once did. One reason is what happened last time. The Palestinians spent years mopping up after Saddam's 1991 defeat, when thousands of Palestinians were thrown out of Kuwait, many of them sent back here to Gaza with limited job prospects and virtually no way of leaving the territory for other countries, given their refugee status. At the same time, because of their support for Saddam, Palestinian leaders became persona non grata in much of the Persian Gulf, and the PLO and other Palestinian movements lost their biggest source of funding.

What's more, the Palestinians' own suffering—a result of both eight years of corruption and despotism under the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) and of Israeli repression of the intifada—has made them more sympathetic to the ordinary Iraqi and less sympathetic to Saddam himself. "I used to love

Hassan Nouri is a journalist based in Jerusalem.

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Saddam because he stood with us," Abdel-Kareem counters. "But, as I saw [so many] people suffering under his rule, I changed my mind. We're imprisoned here [in Gaza]. ... We now understand what it's like to live under a despotic regime." Notes Bier Zeit University political science professor Ali Jarabawi, "On the one hand, you won't find many Palestinians who support the [Iraqi] regime, but, on the other, they don't want the [Iraqi people] to be hit." Palestinian officials, too, are loath to discuss Saddam. Palestinian Cabinet Minister Saeb Erakat, one of the few officials in Ramallah willing to discuss the issue, underscores that the current Iraq crisis must be resolved diplomatically, but that's about all he has to say.

Lastly, as a result of the intifada and its suppression by Ariel Sharon, Palestinians find themselves too preoccupied at home to focus on Saddam. Close to two-thirds of the population has fallen below the poverty line, with the average income dropping from about $1,700 per year to $830, notes P.A. Deputy Planning Minister Jihad Al Wazir. Aid agencies have begun to report malnourishment and the possibility of all-out starvation in some parts of the territories. "Palestinians will express their solidarity in their own way, and this time it will be in a quieter way," says Ziad Abu Amr, chairman of the Political Committee of the Palestinian Legislative Council. "When there's a fire in your house and also in someone else's, you take care of the one in your house first."

None of this is to say that Palestinians support America's war. Although they may have turned against the Iraqi dictator, many Palestinians also fear that a U.S. war against him will steal attention from their cause. Most Palestinians here talk of being forgotten. With camera crews disappearing to go to Baghdad and elsewhere in the Gulf, many Palestinians are bracing for even greater pressure from Sharon's government. "People are most afraid of what a war would mean to them," says Jarabawi. "Palestinians are always the biggest losers in these matters because they have no nation and are [by default] weaker." Twelve years ago, Palestinians believed Saddam might be able to change that. Today, they no longer do. ■

New York Dispatch

Inheritance Tax

BY BENJAMIN SMITH

IT'S NOT HARD to pinpoint the day New York conservatives turned on the new Republican mayor, Michael Bloomberg. It was last November 14, the day he made the case, in a dry PowerPoint presentation, for a 25 percent property tax hike. *The Wall Street Journal* rewarded him with the labels "vapid dilettante" and "classic tax-and-spend NYC liberal." The *National Review* followed up by calling his mayoralty an "accelerating catastrophe." When he gave a dinner for his city council on January 13, two anti-tax-hike Republicans stormed out after the salad.

What's strange about this venom is that—on the issues that matter most—Bloomberg is carrying the flag of the hero of New York's right, Rudolph Giuliani. Two divisive policy questions defined the Giuliani years: policing and welfare. Bloomberg has stayed the course on both, keeping crime falling and the welfare rolls shrinking. Giuliani tried, and failed, to tame the bureaucracy that has swamped the city's public schools. Bloomberg dissolved it. But conservatives are overlooking the hard policy facts for matters of style and patronage—and a singular fixation on taxes.

When it comes to running a city, Giuliani and Bloomberg have strikingly similar records of hardheaded centrism. But the similarities are masked by differences of personality. Giuliani's departure left a huge hole in New York's public life, and on its evening-news broadcasts, which Bloomberg hasn't tried to fill. The billionaire media magnate is an undemonstrative man who rides the subway to work every day but doesn't talk to his fellow passengers. He has a habit of hiding behind his aides when a camera appears.

But Giuliani's huge, combative personality had little to do with his role in New York's transformation in the 1990s. At the heart of that transformation were tough, New Democrat–style policies, anathema to the city's left-leaning Democratic establishment. The most important was a policing strategy that, at its best, was aggressive and optimistic and helped bring crime down to levels most New Yorkers had never seen. In 1993, the year Giuliani was elected, there were 1,946 murders in the city. In his last year, 2001, there were 649, excluding those killed in the September 11 attacks. Giuliani subscribed to the "broken windows" school of policing, which stresses the role that common disorder—like graffiti and abandoned cars—plays in opening a city to crime. He sent police officers to crack down on people for minor trespasses that had long been ignored and tolerated, from fare-jumping to low-level street harassment. His police force sometimes went overboard, and his reflexive support for its members alienated many black New Yorkers. But, with crime dropping so low, no one, black or white, wanted to go back.

Bloomberg has continued Giuliani's "broken window" focus. "I will not allow the streets to become unsafe," Bloomberg has promised repeatedly. Last month, for example, he announced "Operation Impact," which sent 1,400 new Police Academy graduates to walk the streets in the city's remaining crime "hot spots." When it comes to crime, the proof is in the numbers: The police report that crime has fallen by about half in those 61 areas since the beginning of January. In Bloomberg's first year in office, the crime rate continued to fall steeply—for example, there were only 580 murders last

Benjamin Smith covers New York City Hall for THE NEW YORK SUN.

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year—even as crime began to rise again nationally after a decade of decline. And, unlike Giuliani, Bloomberg has encouraged aggressive police work while producing minimal racial hostility. When four black men were shot and killed by police officers in the first two days of this year, black leaders responded soberly, a shift from the race-based charges and countercharges that were automatic after a police shooting in the Giuliani years.

Giuliani's other signal success was welfare reform. When he came to office in 1994, he began screening for fraud and requiring work in exchange for benefits, and, by 1998, he hired policy gurus from Wisconsin, where Governor Tommy Thompson had experimented with welfare reform, and set them to work slashing the city's welfare rolls. The policy drew denunciations from the city's liberal Democratic establishment. Liz Krueger, now a state senator from Manhattan, compared it to "slave labor." Over the course of Giuliani's administration, the number of people receiving public assistance fell to 462,595 in December 2001 from a peak of 1.16 million in March 1995—mostly because they found jobs.

As the Bloomberg administration began, the new mayor continued that same approach. Following Giuliani's lead, he turned down a federal waiver that would have allowed able-bodied childless people to apply for food stamps. In December, he quietly advised Governor George Pataki to reject legislation that would have loosened work requirements and substituted education. Bloomberg has left Giuliani officials in key positions in the Human Resources Administration, which administers the city's welfare program and whose commissioner is one of Bloomberg's few Republican deputies. And his rhetoric reflects the Giuliani mantra of "work first." In his only major address on welfare policy, Bloomberg insisted, "We will not go back to the way things were. We will not allow our city to recede to a culture of dependency." The welfare rolls continue to shrink, dropping 9 percent to 421,242 in Bloomberg's first year, again mostly as recipients found jobs. And, as with policing, Bloomberg has pared the welfare rolls while ruffling fewer feathers than Giuliani did: After years of being frozen out by Giuliani, welfare rights groups have been pleased to find that agency officials will at least meet with them, and the welfare agency has established a purely advisory board that includes welfare recipients and Giuliani critics. As Don Baylor, an official at the liberal advocacy group ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), which is pushing to loosen the work requirement, says, "There have been no real policy changes—just a change in tone."

While it's early to start evaluating Bloomberg's tenure, his most impressive accomplishment may turn out to be his attempt to fix the city's massive educational system, which teaches 1.1 million children per year. Giuliani railed against the Board of Education, a stepchild of 1960s decentralization that was a politicized and unresponsive steward of schools. "The whole system should be blown up," he said in 1999. Bloomberg, through determined, quiet talks with state leaders, has actually blown the thing up. As of last June, schools report directly to him, and the Brooklyn office tower at 110 Livingston Street that had become a symbol of unresponsive "educrats" is now up for sale and will likely be converted to apartments.

LAW AND ORDER, welfare reform, firm and accountable control of education—these are conservative themes in a city that helps define American liberalism. You'd think they would be enough to win the admiration of New York conservatives, who have long existed on the margins of New York's predominantly Democratic public life. But they aren't. That's because the city's conservatives (along with their counterparts in the national debate) are so obsessed with taxes that the issue squeezes out all other policy considerations. Faced with the largest budget gap in the city's history—$6 billion—Bloomberg last fall asked the city council for a 25 percent property-tax increase. The overwhelmingly liberal council gave him 18.5 percent, a $1.7 billion hike and the largest in memory. And scholars at Giuliani's pet think tank, the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, reacted with horror. They argued, not without reason, that Bloomberg should have looked to slash the city's swelling payroll before he moved to raise taxes. "He doesn't understand the relationship between government and the private sector," fumes Steven Malanga, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the author of the November 25 *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece that served as conservatives' opening shot at the mayor. "He thinks his main job is protecting the role of the public sector."

The tax hike abruptly turned conservative opinion and Republican officials against the mayor. And the wisdom of Bloomberg's mix of tax hikes and service cuts is debatable. But, in their fury at Bloomberg, conservatives are targeting the victim. He didn't swell the payroll himself, and he didn't drive the spending up to record levels. Giuliani did. While everybody remembers Giuliani's role in cutting crime and reducing the welfare rolls, nobody remembers his fiscal policy. And with good reason. After a year of real cuts in a recession, Giuliani was handed the '90s boom. He responded with the not-so-difficult boom-time trick of cutting taxes while simultaneously increasing spending. Between the lean fiscal year of 1995 and the summer of 2001, which ended Giuliani's last full fiscal year, the city's budget had climbed to $38 billion from $32 billion. The closest analysis of the section of that spending under the mayor's direct control—$28 billion in Giuliani's last full year—was done by the Manhattan Institute's E.J. McMahon, who found that between July 2000 and June 2001, as the stock markets began to show their weakness, city-funded spending jumped a remarkable 9.1 percent, a rate that

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would have it doubling every eight years. When the boom turned to bust, the new mayor found that his predecessor had handed him a $3 billion budget gap for his first full fiscal year. In other words, the main difference between Giuliani's fiscal policy and Bloomberg's is that Giuliani got a good stock market, which drove Wall Street bonuses—and city income tax revenues—through the roof.

EVER SINCE THE tax increase, conservatives have declared open war against the mayor. But the hike wasn't the entire problem: They had been wary ever since Bloomberg—like Giuliani, a registered Democrat for much of his life—took up their hero's mantle. The crudest reason for this anger is patronage. There are few Republicans in the new mayor's administration, and none of his four deputy mayors are Republicans. And the Republican campaign workers who normally find jobs in an administration once their candidate is elected were rebuffed. Bloomberg didn't hire Republican revolutionaries; he hired career civil servants and government mechanics who are, for the most part, Democrats. "Republicans worked hard to get him elected, but he doesn't understand that he owes anybody anything," said one GOP activist.

Bloomberg's personality and his cultural inclinations also made Giuliani's conservative backers suspicious. Giuliani relished going to war with the liberal establishment over social issues, often in fruitless, symbolic battles like his 1999 attempt to defund the Brooklyn Museum for putting on "Sensation," a show that included a portrait of the Virgin Mary in elephant dung. "My constituents feel that we turn the other cheek time and time again, and it was time to put a line in the sand," James Oddo, the city council's Republican leader, recently said. "They were happy that there was Rudy Giuliani to say, 'Enough is enough.'" Bloomberg won't be taking on that battle any time soon: He has an enthusiasm for contemporary art that he cultivated as a patron of many city museums and has furnished his office with a Keith Haring painting on loan from the Whitney Museum of American Art.

The new mayor's supporters say Giuliani's cult—enhanced by his leadership on September 11, 2001—has turned his backers into zealots, preventing them from conducting a principled examination of his record. "The neocons were completely gutless: Rudy could do no wrong, whether it was borrowing or spending or expanding the payroll," says New York University Professor Mitchell Moss, an informal Bloomberg adviser. "They're unhappy because they don't have Rudy to worship. The only solution for them is to name their children after him."

But the real problem on Bloomberg's right flank isn't that he's too liberal. It's that Giuliani wasn't as conservative as his old allies in New York and his new friends in Washington like to remember. It's a lesson that may be maddening to Bloomberg today. But, as Giuliani steps onto a national GOP stage in an overwhelmingly conservative Republican Party—he's expected to play a lead role at the 2004 convention in New York—his moderate record could come back to haunt "America's mayor" as well. ■

Campaign Journal

State of Peace

BY RYAN LIZZA

INDIANOLA, IOWA

WAR ON IRAQ IS TERRORISM, proclaims one poster. JUST WAR? asks another, before concluding, JUST OIL! One after another, the signs dot the length of the faux-wood-paneled wall of the local Masonic Temple: DROP BUSH, NOT BOMBS; NO WAR WITH IRAQ; EMPIRES FALL. WILL OURS?; IOWA SAYS PEACE: THE WAY TO SUPPORT THE TROOPS. Many of the older women in the room wear pink ribbons on their blouses, the newest fashion accessory among antiwar Iowa Democrats.

Like party activists all over the state this month, these Warren County Democrats, crammed behind rows of brown folding tables and slurping spoonfuls of beef barley soup or potato-corn chowder, are here for the off-year caucuses, a time for Democrats to attend to local party business, hash out the lessons of the last election, and get their first impressions of where the presidential candidates stand on the issues of the day—foremost among them, the war with Iraq.

But John Edwards isn't talking about the war. He's talking about George W. Bush. Edwards has his sleeves rolled up and is delivering what has evolved into a strident personal indictment of the president and his policies. On the stump, Edwards is working to redefine Bush as a privileged elitist, out of touch with regular Americans and captive to a clique of "insiders" who run his administration. The speech combines the simple logical flow of a legal brief with the populist broadsides of a gifted campaigner. Bush has "got a little group of people, a small group of insiders who run this country *for* insiders," declares the senator. "It is *not* an accident. It is a *direct* result of his own life experience. These insiders, they are the people that helped elect him governor. They are the same people who helped elect him president. He's not forgotten it. He will *never* forget it. And it shows up in everything he does." Why did the patients' bill of rights legislation die? "He can not say no to his friends the HMOs and the big insurance companies." Why isn't Edwards's plan to lower prescription-drug prices the law of the land? "Because this president is *married* to the pharmaceutical industry." And why is Bush "gutting" the Clean Air Act? "Because the energy industry wants it. The oil companies want it. This is not an accident; it is a pattern. It happens over and over and over."

If there is one issue where the Indianola audience is particularly inclined to believe that Edwards's "pattern" holds, it's Iraq. But here the senator abandons the "oil-companies-want-it" explanation that might follow from his unified theory of

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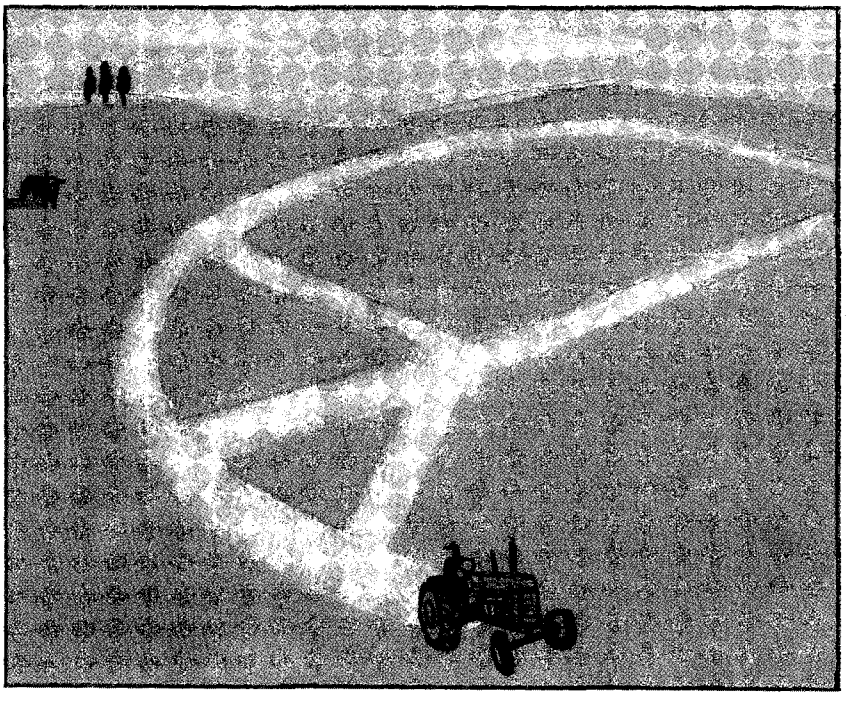

Iowans can't get enough of peacenik Howard Dean.

Bush. "I see the signs on the wall," Edwards says. "And I know that a lot of people in this room, maybe most of you, will disagree with me about this, but you need to know, you need to hear it straight from my mouth, not read it somewhere, that I do believe Saddam Hussein is dangerous. I do believe he needs to be disarmed. And I believe that, if necessary, we should be willing to use force to do it." There are no jeers, just silence. You can feel the enthusiasm draining from the room. Edwards quickly segues into an attack on the rest of Bush's foreign policy, but his pro-war detour leaves the biggest impression. "There's no support here" for the war, says Indianola caucusgoer Walter Pearson. "Not among active Democrats."

An Edwards adviser standing next to me argues that Iowans will respect the senator for bringing up the issue on his own, rather than ducking it. And, indeed, a few minutes later an antiwar Democrat named Dennis Nicholson tells me, "I admire him for saying that." Nonetheless, in Iowa right now, where polls confirm that the Democratic electorate is more opposed to invading Iraq than Democrats are nationally, being anti-Bush is no substitute for being antiwar.

That becomes clear when Howard Dean gets up to speak. Dean is not just an angry candidate, he is borderline enraged, and this is a big part of why his "straight-talking" stump speech is the shrewdest piece of political rhetoric on the 2004 campaign trail to date. He doesn't just try to distinguish himself from the rest of the field, he tries to humiliate his rivals.

Whereas Bush's opposition to the patients' bill of rights lies at the heart of Edwards's attack on the president, Dean belittles the issue as a Beltway sideshow that does nothing for people without health care. "In Congress, the Democrats and the Republicans are fighting over the patients' bill of rights," he hollers. "The Democrats say you ought to sue your HMO. The Republicans say you shouldn't. Who cares? What difference does it make if anything in that bill passes or if it doesn't pass at all? Do you think one more person is going to have health insurance if it passes?" Dean's major rivals all criticize Bush for underfunding the new education act, but they supported the law itself. Naturally, Dean is against it. "The president of the United States took his very successful model that made Texas forty-eighth in the country in education and now wants to apply it to the best state in the country, which is Iowa," Dean offers sarcastically. After running through a couple of obscure provisions in the law, he asks, slowly and indignantly, "What are our people doing voting for this kind of stuff?"

But, ultimately, Dean's opposition to the war is the source of his surprising strength in Iowa. After warming up the crowd with a joke or two—in 1980, "I voted with Carter people all day, and I partied with Kennedy people all night"—he moves swiftly to Iraq. "I think the president of the United States has been reckless with our money and reckless with our children, sending them to Iraq when we don't think it's such a good idea," he yells. So much for Edwards's attempt to play down the issue.

IT WAS THE same thing a few hours earlier when Dean spoke before the Iowa Federation of Labor (IFL) in Altoona. The president of the IFL, Mark Smith, opens the candidate forum with a long antiwar statement beamed around the country on C-SPAN. "Like most Americans, we at the labor movement are concerned about the war in Iraq," he says. "We wonder why we have billions to retire Saddam Hussein but no money to provide for the retirement security of Americans. We wonder why we have billions to ruin the health of Iraqis but no money to provide for health care for Americans." When it is Dean's turn to speak, he gently reminds his audience where the other candidates stand on the issue of the day. He compliments Senator Joe Lieberman for having "stuck to his guns" after he voted for war but condemns an unnamed candidate "who says to you in Iowa that the Iraq war is bad, goes back and votes in favor of the resolution, and then comes back and tells you at your county dinners why it's not a good thing." Translation: Lieberman may be a warmonger, but John Kerry is a duplicitous warmonger. As usual, Dean brings down the house.

The conventional wisdom is that now that militant antiwar candidate Dennis Kucinich has entered the race, Dean's appeal will be diminished and the antiwar vote divided. That may be true, but watching the two men speak together and separately at several events in Iowa last week, another possibility presents itself: Kucinich will help make Dean look more

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moderate and presidential. Kucinich, a congressman from Cleveland, is truly a fringe candidate. He doesn't just attack John Ashcroft; he wants to repeal the entire Patriot Act. He's not just against the war; he insists it's only "about oil and a misguided strategy of empire." By contrast, for all of Dean's Iraq war-bashing, he is still a pro-gun deficit hawk disliked by left-wingers in his own state. Having been dismissed by the more viable candidates for the last year, Dean can now point to Kucinich—along with former Illinois Senator Carol Moseley-Braun and Al Sharpton—as the real unelectables in the field. Indeed, while there is a tinge of annoyance over Kucinich's entry into the race within the Dean campaign, overall its attitude toward the congressman is best described as condescending. After Kucinich gave a stridently pro-labor speech at the IFL event, a Dean aide mockingly remarked, "It was great—if he were running for president of the United Auto Workers."

Besides, Kucinich has an Achilles heel with Iowa liberals. I saw him speak before two small groups in the college town of Iowa City, and his attempt to explain away his pro-life congressional record seemed like a deal breaker for voters at both events. "They're not going to go with someone who bobs and weaves about something so important," says Catherine Denial, an antiwar Democrat who said she's backing Dean. Kucinich's position on the war, in other words, might help him a little, but in the end most antiwar activists in the state will probably stick with Dean.

IOWA'S ANTIWAR ROOTS run deep. On a recent afternoon, Jack Holveck, a soft-spoken state senator and Quaker from Des Moines, offers me a brief history lesson under the nineteenth-century brass chandeliers on the floor of Iowa's magnificent Senate chambers. In a way, Holveck explains, Iowa was founded by antiwar activists. It was settled by a mix of French, Germans, Norwegians, and Swedes. "Some of those folks came to the United States to avoid conscription and serving in emperors' armies," says Holveck. As longtime Iowa political reporter David Yepsen once quipped, "Most of our ancestors are draft-dodgers from the Kaiser's armies in the 1870s." Even earlier than that, Iowa had a disproportionately traumatic experience during the Civil War, losing more of its citizens per capita than any other state save Indiana.

In the late nineteenth century, many of the so-called peace churches, such as the Quakers, the Church of the Brethren, and the Mennonites, which are pacifist—whose members, as the Quakers say, "take the peace testimony"—all thrived in Iowa. Holveck notes that his Quaker ancestors were North Carolina abolitionists who fled the state for the Midwest. While numbers are small today, much of the antiwar activism in the state is channeled through these liberal religious groups. The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker group in Des Moines, is now a hub of antiwar activity in the state and has been since the Vietnam War. When Dean, Edwards, Kucinich, and Lieberman gathered at the labor forum last week, the front page of *The Des Moines Register* featured a story about an antiwar religious service downtown that attracted 750 people—a strong showing considering just 100,000 Democrats attend the caucuses statewide.

Another reason Holveck and others offer to explain Iowa's deep-seated dovishness is its lack of a defense industry. Iowa consistently ranks near the bottom of the list of states that receive federal defense dollars. Not surprisingly, Iowa's Republican senator, Chuck Grassley, has made a name for himself investigating Pentagon profligacy. Grassley was one of only two Republican senators to vote against the 1991 Gulf war resolution and the only Republican to vote for the Democratic alternative, which called for more sanctions and diplomacy. After the Gulf conflict, he told one reporter, "Our main reason for going to war was oil." Last year, another Iowa Republican, Representative Jim Leach, agonized over his war vote. Ultimately, he was one of six House Republicans to oppose Bush's resolution and went on to win a close race. Some peace activists in Iowa rewarded Leach with their votes and now take credit for his narrow victory.

While Iowa is often described as isolationist, many of the activists here are in fact radically multilateralist. The morning after I met with Holveck, I stopped by a meeting of the leading Des Moines antiwar activists, a group of about ten who have dubbed themselves the Peace Committee. They meet regularly at the home of Chet Guinn, who lives in a large converted firehouse decorated with dozens of toy fire trucks and a working fire pole that he uses to drop down to the meetings from his upstairs living room. Guinn traces his political activism to the 1950s, when he was president of the local chapter of the United World Federation, a world-government group that thought the United Nations was too weak. There are also six United Nations Associations scattered across the state—more than in all of Texas. One of Iowa's major philanthropic organizations, the Stanley Foundation, is dedicated to issues of global governance and promoting a multilateral U.S. foreign policy. James Larew, the author of a history of Democrats in the state, offers Iowa's most famous politician, Henry Wallace, as an example of the state's approach to foreign affairs. Wallace, Franklin Roosevelt's leftist vice president and then commerce secretary, became a crusading dove during the cold war and was eventually sacked by Harry Truman for his foreign policy views. "He is a pacifist one hundred percent," Truman wrote in his diary the day before he asked for Wallace's resignation. "He wants to disband our armed forces, give Russia our atomic secrets and trust a bunch of adventurers in the Kremlin Politburo." (Wallace's next job was editor of THE NEW REPUBLIC.)

Another factor contributing to Iowa's dovishness is farm economics. In the 1950s, Iowa farmers were more concerned with trading with the Soviet Union than containing it. "This was always a state that was more interested in cooperation with the evil empire," says David Nagle, a former Iowa congressman who is now trying to organize Democrats against the war. "We were having Soviet farmers here before anybody else." Peverill Squire, a political scientist at the University of Iowa, explains, "The state of Iowa has these conflicting traditions of being isolationist, staying out of other people's busi-

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ness. At the same time, the state is pretty internationalist, especially on trade." Iowa politicians have regularly backed the free-trade alphabet soup of GATT, NAFTA, PNTR, and TPA.

But, while all these elements played a role in the development of Iowa's antiwar movement, the crucial moment, unsurprisingly, was Vietnam. Indeed, it is virtually impossible to disentangle the birth of a viable Iowa Democratic Party—and of the caucuses—from Vietnam. From the Civil War to the 1960s, Iowa was a solidly Republican state. As Larew explains in his book *A Party Reborn*, Democrat Harold Hughes won the governorship in 1962 and led a revival of the party. In 1968, he began to speak out against the Vietnam War, first in a speech nominating Eugene McCarthy at the disastrous Democratic convention in Chicago and then on the campaign trail running successfully for the Senate as an unapologetic antiwar candidate. "Hughes was so bold in '68, when other politicians were dancing around the war issue like some of them are now," says Larew. "He said, 'If you send me to Washington, I'm going there to end the war.' " Hughes also became a key member of a commission that reformed and opened up the Democratic nominating process in the wake of the Chicago riots. That commission gave birth to the Iowa caucuses. Spurred in part by Hughes's antiwar message, a new generation of young, antiwar Iowans joined the party by 1972, shrewdly scheduling the caucuses early in the year to draw attention to their issues. "Almost all of them were antiwar people," says Robert Fulton, who was Hughes's lieutenant governor in the late '60s. "The war was the impetus for starting all this." When some of the older Democrats arrived at their caucus meetings on a wintry night, they were surprised to find all the young, new peace activists. As Yepsen once explained in an interview, "If you go to your caucus, and there's a bunch of hippies and beatniks there who want to stay and argue about atrocities in Vietnam all night, you're inclined to go home." Many did, enabling peace candidate George McGovern to win the state and then the nomination.

Today, much of the creaky antiwar machinery of the 1970s and 1980s is coming back to life. The once influential Stop the Arms Race Political Action Committee (STARPAC) is being reenergized, and college activists schooled in the techniques of the anti-globalization movement are linking up with Iowa Democratic leaders of the '70s to learn how to influence the caucuses. Karen Pease, a 22-year-old activist, recently cofounded Iowa Democrats for Peace and Liberty, which aims to create a "peace-based voting bloc" at the caucuses. The idea is to organize a committed bloc of activists now that will stay largely inactive but then spring to life on caucus night.

ALL THIS, OF COURSE, is a nightmare for the most unapologetically pro-war Democrat in the race, Joe Lieberman. "I don't expect to win here," he explains to reporters at the state Capitol after a meeting with Governor Tom Vilsack on his first day in Iowa since officially declaring his run for president. He's not alone in this assessment: *Nobody* expects him to win here—in large part because nobody here plans to vote for him. At the Capitol, almost every question for Lieberman is about Iraq, and they're virtually all hostile. "I haven't found one person in Iowa who supports the man," says Larew, an Edwards backer. John Deeth, a caucusgoer in Iowa City, expresses a common sentiment among state Democrats, especially antiwar voters, "Anybody but Lieberman."

Lieberman must know that Iowa has been a graveyard for Democratic hawks. Henry "Scoop" Jackson, the hawkish Democratic senator, competed in the caucuses twice in the '70s, coming in last both times. In 1988, Al Gore, the most hawkish Democrat in the presidential field that year, picked a public fight with STARPAC and ultimately skipped the caucuses, complaining that they "reward ideological purity rather than intellectual honesty." Some Democrats in Iowa think Lieberman is toying with that idea, but he insists he will be competitive and even goes out of his way to praise the spirit of antiwar activism. "It says something good about the American people that a lot of our fellow Americans don't want to go to war," he says. "Members of Congress who support military action against Iraq, which I have, must listen to those voices of protest."

Of all the pro-war candidates, Lieberman has been the most steadfast in his support of getting rid of Saddam. His campaign has focused on general election themes and admirably refused to pander to Democratic constituencies. Like Edwards, he hopes standing on principle will gain him some respect in the long run. And, like Dean, he uses his consistency to take shots at unnamed candidates who waffle on the war: "I think I'm at a point in my career where I've got to do what I think is best for our country's security, for the security of the American people, and hope that, even if some Democrats disagree with my position, as I know some do, [they] will respect me for being truthful and for not trying to have it both ways."

Long-held principles aside, Lieberman is also hoping that the issue will simply fade away. He is the one candidate who hints publicly at what aides to all the pro-war candidates told me privately: Guys like Dean may now be getting a huge organizational boost from the war, but, at the caucuses next year, the war will no longer matter. "Hopefully," Lieberman explains, "and I believe this is a reasonable thing to say, by the time caucus voters in Iowa go to vote next January nineteenth, any possibility of military action in Iraq will have passed as a part of history." At that point, liberals will be watching to see how committed Bush is to democracy in Iraq, an issue Lieberman is spending a lot of time talking about. In the war's aftermath, Lieberman suggests, a decade of advocacy for the overthrow of Saddam will be an asset, not a liability. Just as the ouster of Slobodan Milosevic and the fall of the Taliban neutered previous antiwar movements, next January it will be up to the Kuciniches and the Deans of the race to explain why they opposed ridding the Middle East of a tyrant. Before leaving, Lieberman offers a final piece of political wisdom to the gathered reporters, who all seem to agree that his campaign is stuck in neutral. It could serve as Lieberman's motto: "Running for president is not a sprint, it's a marathon." ■

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Bush's abysmal failure on homeland security.

The 9/10 President

BY JONATHAN CHAIT

The president has clung to his pre–September 11 priorities—chiefly, cutting taxes—to the detriment of Americans' safety.

IT DISAPPEARED SO quickly that it is easy to forget the bipartisan patriotism and common purpose that existed in Washington immediately after September 11, 2001. Perhaps the most memorable event from that period was the gathering of members of Congress from both parties on the steps of the Capitol to sing "God Bless America." Another such episode—little-noticed, but actually more remarkable—occurred the following month. Shut out of their offices due to anthrax attacks, Democrat David Obey and Republican Bill Young, the ranking members of the House Appropriations Committee, set about investigating the nation's readiness to repel future terrorist attacks. The two met with representatives from every major security agency: FBI, CIA, National Security Agency, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and so on. And what they found frightened them. Even though Congress had speedily approved $20 billion in homeland security spending in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, prime terrorist targets around the country remained appallingly vulnerable.

Working together, Obey and Young compiled a list of the most immediate security needs neglected in the first round of funding. They decided that only those items agreed upon by both parties would make the list. "We stripped the list down to its bare essentials," Obey recalls. "When that was done, I asked my staff to cut the remaining list in half to make sure there was absolutely no 'soft stuff.'" They came up with a list that was very hard to argue with—computer upgrades for the FBI, improved security for ports and nuclear facilities, new customs agents, and other top homeland security priorities totaling about $10 billion. On November 6, 2001, Obey and Young, along with their Senate counterparts Robert Byrd and Ted Stevens, were ushered into the White House Cabinet Room to meet with President Bush. "I understand some of you may want to spend more money on homeland security than we have requested," Bush told them, according to members of both parties who attended. "My good friend [Budget Director] Mitch Daniels here assures me that our [$20 billion funding] request is adequate. . . . I want to make it clear that if Congress appropriates one dollar more than we have requested, I will veto the bill."

Bush declared that he had time to hear four comments, one from each of the four congressmen, before he had to leave. In his allotted comment time, Obey explained to the president that the funding requests had come from the president's own agency appointees and that he and Young would remove any particular items to which Bush objected. He also described specific federal installations he had learned were vulnerable and asked if the president had been informed of them. "If [Bush] had been briefed," Obey recounts, "he gave no evidence of it."

Unable to win agreement from the president, Obey sought a vote in the House to add more money for homeland security. The post–September 11 climate, even among Republicans, remained highly receptive to homeland security spending. Republican Representative Hal Rogers, chairman of the Transportation Subcommittee, said, "There are needs we are unable to meet" with $20 billion alone. John Duncan, chairman of the Water Resources Subcommittee, told the Scripps-Howard News Service that two GOP House leaders had agreed with him to spend $1.5 *trillion* over five years.

From the White House's point of view, this represented a problem. Even before the September 11 attacks, growing

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deficits were undermining political support for Bush's signature tax cuts, and a spending outburst, however necessary, would increase the pressure even more. So the administration dispatched Vice President Dick Cheney to personally lobby Congress to hold the line against further homeland defense spending. By all appearances, Cheney appealed to pure party discipline. "Stay in lockstep, stay behind the president," urged Young, now toeing the party line, in a November 14, 2001, floor speech in the House. As *The New York Times* noted two weeks later, when the House voted along party lines to not even permit debate on Obey's proposal, "No Republicans challenged any items Mr. Obey said were needed. But Representative Ray LaHood of Illinois said, 'Nobody knows more about this than the commander-in-chief.'"

THIS EPISODE IS not an anomaly. Through passivity or, more often, active opposition, President Bush has repeatedly stifled efforts to strengthen domestic safeguards against further terrorist attacks. As a consequence, homeland security remains perilously deficient. "President Bush vetoed several specific (and relatively cost-effective) measures proposed by Congress that would have addressed critical national vulnerabilities. As a result, the country remains more vulnerable than it should be today," concluded a report published last month by the Brookings Institution. A December 2002 report sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations concurs: "America remains dangerously unprepared to prevent and respond to a catastrophic terrorist attack on U.S. soil."

Bush's record on homeland security ought to be considered a scandal. Yet, not only is it not a scandal, it's not even a story, having largely failed to register with the public, the media, or even the political elite. One reason is that it's simply hard to believe that something as essential as protecting Americans from terrorism would be resisted by any serious person in Washington. We have been hearing for a year and a half, after all, that September 11 altered the basic dynamics of American politics, at least as far as security issues go. "Pieties centered on individual rights have yielded to pieties of collective purpose and national security," observed an essay published in *Time* magazine two months after the attacks. It's even harder to believe that the resistance would come from Bush. The president has asserted over and over that he has made homeland security his "highest priority." "What's important for us, as we work to secure the homeland," he declared at a campaign stop last fall, "is to remember that the stakes have changed. After September the eleventh the world changed." The media have repeated Bush's claim again and again. "THREAT OF TERRORISM IS SHAPING THE FOCUS OF BUSH PRESIDENCY," asserted a headline in *The New York Times* on September 11, 2002. Bush's "deeds—especially the $2 trillion federal budget he'll submit next week—demonstrate that for him the overriding priority now and for the rest of his term will be waging the war on terrorism and ensuring homeland security," reported *USA Today* a year ago.

The notion of a once-unsteady Bush transformed by September 11 is also a central theme of the president's supporters. As former Bush speechwriter David Frum tells it in his White House memoir, *The Right Man*, "There was no more domestic agenda. The domestic agenda was the same as the foreign agenda: Win the war—then we'll see." Columnist Charles Krauthammer contrasts the Clinton years—"our holiday from history"—with the steely resolve of Bush: "We now recognize the central problem of the 21st century: the conjunction of terrorism, rogue states and weapons of mass destruction."

It's certainly true that September 11 prompted Bush to abandon the soft isolationism he advocated during the campaign. (Remember his obsession with "humility" in foreign affairs?) It's also true that many liberals have allowed their discomfort with U.S. military power, especially when wielded by a Republican president they despise, to blind them to the potential danger of a nuclear-armed Saddam Hussein. And yet the most striking thing about the Bush administration's behavior in this new era is the degree to which the president has clung to his pre–September 11 priorities—foremost among them, slashing taxes—even to the detriment of girding the nation against terrorism. The disturbing truth is that Bush's domestic agenda has not only made the nation less prosperous and less fair, it has also made it less safe.

WHEN BUSH SIGNED the Homeland Security Act last November, he announced, "Our government will take every possible measure to safeguard our country and our people." His use of such pay-any-price, bear-any-burden rhetoric has been near-constant. Following a speech a year ago, *The Washington Post* noted that the president "fram[ed] his [homeland security] proposal in a manner that echoed President John F. Kennedy's race to place a man on the moon." But a closer examination of Bush's actual policies finds them sorely hobbled by his conservative agenda and ideology.

Consider, for instance, the problem of protecting the private sector—power plants, chemical facilities, trucking, office buildings, you name it. Terrorists, of course, have not limited their attacks to government property—the World Trade Center was attacked twice. A Brookings Institution study suggested that some combination of mandatory safety standards and terrorism insurance would give the private sector the needed impetus to impose basic protections. The administration, though, has done nothing—literally nothing—to require this. (And, therefore, as *The Washington Post* reported this week, "Most U.S. businesses are electing not to buy terrorism insurance.") A forthright explanation for this inaction can be found in the administration's *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, published last July. The report insists that "sufficient incentives exist in the private market to supply protection."

At first glance, the administration's assumption that private industry has sufficiently strong incentives to shore itself up against terrorism appears sensible enough—nobody wants their property to be blown up, after all. This logic works per-

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fectly well when it comes to encouraging private industry to guard against, say, burglary, where the victim bears the entire cost of the crime. But, as Brookings' Peter Orszag has noted, businesses hit by terrorism would *not* bear the entire cost themselves. First, they have every reason to expect a government bailout, like the airlines received after September 11. Second, some firms have interdependent security, which means their security precautions are worthless unless all their competitors follow suit. (The bomb that destroyed Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland in 1988 was transferred to Pan Am after being initially checked through another airline.) Terrorist strikes upon a private business impose costs, both psychological and economic, upon the entire country. So, while a business owner may have no interest in spending more money to prevent terrorism than to prevent, say, an electrical fire, the nation's interest is quite different. For all these reasons, the logic of individual incentive breaks down when it comes to terrorism.

But, because of the administration's ideological resistance to government action, Brookings concluded in its report last month, "the Federal government made little or no progress in guiding private-sector firms—even ones that handle dangerous materials—toward improving their own security." The reductio ad absurdum of the White House's neglect is its failure to require tougher standards at chemical plants, which Al Qaeda is known to have studied. The chemical industry is a textbook case of a private interest that would not bear the cost of a terrorist strike alone—an explosion at a chemical facility could harm thousands or even millions in the surrounding area. But Bob Bostock, the assistant Environmental Protection Agency administrator for homeland security, told *The Washington Post* that, even in the absence of federal action, the chemical industry "has a very powerful incentive to do the right thing. It ought to be their worst nightmare that their facility would be the target of a terrorist act because they did not meet their responsibility to their community." The "incentive," then, that Bostock believes will cause chemical firms to invest in security is not economic but rather the industry's own sense of civic duty.

Just in case the consciences of chemical-plant owners proved insufficiently reliable to entrust with public safety, Senator Jon Corzine sponsored a bill toughening security standards at chemical plants. Last summer, the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works approved it by a 19-to-zero vote. But, as John B. Judis reported in these pages (see "Poison," January 27, 2003), the chemical industry lobbied Republicans to turn against the bill, and the White House stood by while they killed it. As a result, the chemical industry remains a ripe target. Last year, an investigation of 60 chemical plants by the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* found a pattern of lax security, including problems at four plants in Houston and Chicago that could endanger more than one million people each. A July article in the New York *Daily News* revealed that at the Matheson Tri-Gas facility in East Rutherford, New Jersey—where a chemical release could endanger up to 7.3 million people—there was virtually no security at all: Gates were left open, tanks were exposed, and no security personnel were present on site.

MORE DANGEROUS EVEN than the prospect of a chemical attack is the potential for terrorists to capture, or set off, a nuclear weapon. The risk sufficiently alarmed Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham—a conservative Bush appointee—that he requested $379.7 million to protect various Energy Department facilities where nuclear weapons are designed, manufactured, and stockpiled. On March 14, 2002, Abraham wrote to Daniels pleading his case. "[W]e are storing vast amounts of materials that remain highly volatile and subject to unthinkable consequences if placed in the wrong hands," Abraham implored. "[T]he Department now is unable to meet the next round of critical security mission requirements. ... Failure to support these urgent security requirements is a risk that would be unwise."

Apparently this warning failed to move the White House, which approved just $26.4 million for Energy Department security—7 percent of Abraham's request. The list of improvements Bush declined to fund included more secure barriers and fences, computer improvements to defend against hackers, equipment to detect explosives in packages and vehicles entering department sites, and a reduction in the overall number of sites that store bomb-grade plutonium and uranium. The department's chief financial officer, also a Bush appointee, wrote to budget officials in March, "We are disconcerted that OMB refused our security supplemental request. I would have much preferred to have heard this from you personally, and been given an opportunity to discuss, not to mention appeal, your decision." (Georgia Republican Saxby Chambliss defended Bush's position by arguing, "If we are talking about protecting the entire nuclear world, where does it end? I know we need some measure of security, but is the taxpayer willing to say we gotta have one hundred percent security at every single facility in America?" Chambliss subsequently won a Senate seat by portraying his opponent, triple-amputee, Vietnam veteran Max Cleland, as insufficiently committed to homeland security.)

Nor is the administration's disregard for safety against nuclear terrorism limited to our own shores. The disintegration of the former Soviet Union left behind a landscape littered with unemployed nuclear scientists and poorly guarded weapons facilities. Because of this, the $1 billion the United States devotes to locking down unsecured nuclear material and scientists in Russia and elsewhere is perhaps the most cost-effective money in the entire federal budget. But it is still not nearly enough. In order to airlift enriched uranium out of Serbia last summer—a needed safety measure by any reasonable calculation— the administration was forced to rely upon private donations (see "Old Guard," by Michael Crowley, September 9 & 16, 2002). A bipartisan Energy Department study in January 2001 urged raising the budget for such programs to $3 billion—still less than 0.15 percent of the federal budget. Bush, by contrast, last year proposed to *cut* overseas nuclear security funding by 5 percent and this year proposes less than $100 million of additional funds.

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BUSH'S STINGINESS EXTENDS even to his own signature initiatives. Last December, the White House unveiled plans to vaccinate 500,000 health care workers against smallpox so they could safely treat a terrorist-induced outbreak. The administration set a 30-day deadline to complete the job, but, after a month, only 4,200—less than 1 percent—have taken the vaccine. One reason for the low take-up rate is potential side effects: For every one million people inoculated, an estimated 15 or more will suffer blindness, swelling of the brain, or other severe reactions. This has made health care workers particularly reluctant because most of them lack proper insurance to cover the risk of disability or lost wages from such side effects. Hospitals, doctors, and unions have asked the administration to create a compensation fund to cover such contingencies—a notion members of Congress in both parties support. But the administration has refused, with the result that few health care workers have been inoculated. This means that, in the event of a terrorist smallpox attack, many may have second thoughts about treating the victims. Imagine you're an uninoculated nurse, and there's a smallpox attack causing hundreds of patients to be rushed to your hospital. Do you care for them—or flee to your home and get out the duct tape?

In his many photo-ops with police officers and firefighters, President Bush has also promised $3.5 billion in new funding for "first responders." Everyone who studies homeland security agrees that firefighters and police officers need better training, protective gear, and communications equipment when they rush to the scene of a terrorist attack. (On September 11, 2001, police helicopters saw that the South World Trade Center Tower had collapsed but could not warn the firefighters in the remaining tower because their radio frequencies are not compatible.) But, in fact, Bush only provides $800 million in new money—he merely shifts the other $2.7 billion from other, existing grants to police and firefighters. As *Congressional Quarterly* reported last month, "The fact is, according to the administration's own budget documents, the Bush plan for funding first responders amounts to double-entry bookkeeping: changes in the ledger that would result in no net increase in the amount of federal funding flowing to cities, counties, and states."

Or consider port security. Ninety-five percent of America's imports get here via sea. Of the containers that make their way through our ports, though, only one in 50 is ever searched. As Stephen Flynn, a former Coast Guard commander who directed the Council on Foreign Relations' homeland security report, told a TV interviewer last month, "We have virtually no security there." The Coast Guard has estimated it would cost $1 billion immediately and another $4.5 billion over the next nine years to make domestic ports sufficiently secure. But, since September 11, they've received just $318 million. One program, the Container Security Initiative, which would screen cargo at foreign ports, was specifically endorsed by Bush last June. "The Customs Service," he told an audience in Port Elizabeth, New Jersey, "is working with overseas ports and shippers to improve its knowledge of container shipments, assessing risk so that we have a better feel of who we ought to look at, what we ought to worry about." And yet Bush's budget provides not one new penny of funding for the program.

Indeed, you could tell a story such as the ones above for any of a dozen homeland security improvements shot down or dramatically underfunded by the Bush administration. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), to cite one more example, has just 14 agents to track down 1,200 illegal immigrants from countries where Al Qaeda has been active. "They just have nowhere near enough people," James Kallstrom, a former assistant director for the FBI and current security adviser to New York Governor George Pataki, told *The New York Times* last May. "They need a geometric increase." INS requested $52 million to hire more agents but was turned down by Bush. Obey's bill—the one Bush lobbied congressional Republicans to kill—would have boosted funding for all these things, along with FBI computer upgrades, grants to airport security, state health departments, more customs agents, vaccine research, and so on.

SINCE OBEY'S MEETING with the White House in 2001, Democrats have kept trying to bolster homeland security spending, and Bush has kept stymieing them. Last summer, Congress overwhelmingly approved a $5.1 billion spending bill, half of which consisted of desperately needed homeland security funding. Bush theatrically declared a pocket veto. "I understand their position. And today, they're going to learn mine. We'll spend none of it," he announced at his economic forum in Waco, Texas, where the handpicked crowd burst into applause. Later, in the fall of 2002, the Senate and the House couldn't agree on how to meet Bush's spending limits and left town before the elections without appropriating any new funding for homeland security. Denied funds they had been counting on, the Energy Department, Customs Service, and other frontline fighters against terrorism had to freeze planned improvements. The administration actually *celebrated* this development. "There's a new sheriff in town, and he's dedicated to fiscal discipline," crowed White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer last October.

When the GOP subsequently took control of Congress last November, Bush demanded they cut $10 billion from previously approved spending levels to meet his budget. This not only further delayed the dissemination of homeland spending, it forced Republicans to cut below even Bush's funding levels for some programs. "If the tardy fiscal 2003 appropriations bills are any indication," observed *Congressional Quarterly* earlier this month, "the future of homeland security is going to be fights over every penny, whether it is radios that allow New York City police and fire departments to talk to each other or radiation detectors for ocean shipping containers in Long Beach, Calif."

Yet, even when the mainstream media reports on Bush's efforts to limit homeland security spending, they still accept his basic assertion that homeland security is his top priority.

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Take, for instance, this *Washington Post* story from October 19, 2002:

> [T]he White House appears to have put more emphasis on holding the line on overall spending levels than on winning the spending increases it has sought. The president's high-stakes demand for fiscal discipline in areas he has not emphasized has jeopardized his top priorities. In limbo are billions of proposed dollars to secure the nation's ports and skies, defend against bioterrorism. ... Instead of funding those proposals, lawmakers voted this week to keep federal agencies running at current spending levels until Nov. 22, leaving town with the non-military side of government practically operating as if Sept. 11 never happened. Yet White House spokesman Ari Fleischer sought yesterday to paint the impasse as a Bush victory.

Isn't it just a bit odd that the president would work tirelessly to scuttle his own "top priorities" and then revel in their failure?

WHAT OUGHT TO be obvious but has somehow escaped public attention is that Bush's top priorities are *not* new spending on homeland security but the same conservative aims that animated him before September 11, 2001. The traditional conservative view of government spending celebrates military outlays while disparaging pretty much everything else. And, despite the lip service it pays to homeland security, the Bush administration continues to view spending through that prism. Daniels gave voice to this view during a press briefing earlier this month. "There is not enough money in the galaxy to protect every square inch of America and every American against every conceivable threat that every hateful fanatic in the world might conjure up," he replied testily to a question about Bush's commitment to homeland spending. "So the real essence of homeland security is going to be, number one, go after terror where it lives." Of course, nobody is talking about all the money in the galaxy—Senator Joe Lieberman may be the most extravagant proponent of homeland security spending, demanding an extra $16 billion per year, or less than 1 percent of the federal budget. And most analysts think homeland security programs are, as Brookings put it, "among the nation's most cost-effective mechanisms for reducing the risk of terrorism." But, then, it's unnatural for the people around Bush to relinquish an ideology that has guided them, in most cases, for their entire adult lives.

And, of course, Bush's highest priority—above constraining spending or anything else—remains tax cuts. The tax cuts Bush has already passed have been major contributors to burgeoning federal deficits; those deficits, in turn, have made Republicans in Congress queasy about acceding to further tax cuts. So Bush has tried to rein in those deficits by cutting spending wherever politically feasible, including on homeland security. Indeed, it is in Bush's interest to engineer showdowns with Congress over spending, in order to connect growing deficits in the public's mind with profligate spenders in Congress rather than with tax cutters in the White House. Thus, Bush waited until his economic summit last August, when he had the attention of the national press corps, to dramatically announce his veto of a spending bill that contained vital homeland security improvements. That the bill, at $5.1 billion, amounted to a tiny fraction of the annual cost of his tax cut hardly mattered—to the folks watching the evening news, anything over $1 million sounds like a lot of money.

Republican Senator Ted Stevens admitted what many in his party no doubt privately believe when he said last month that he would have supported more spending on homeland security were it not for the endless red ink: "I confess that, if we didn't have the limitations we face, the deficit we face, I would once again support Senator Byrd's funding in each of these items." Bush's priorities are perfectly clear. He cares more about tax cuts than reducing the deficit. He cares more about controlling the deficit than boosting spending on homeland security. Ergo, Bush cares more about cutting taxes than boosting spending on homeland security.

WHY HAS BUSH'S *myopia not become a major* political liability for the administration? Perhaps because it simply doesn't fit any existing storyline. The idea that Bush has little regard for the environment, for instance, has been implanted so deeply in the political narrative that every time his administration contemplates even the slightest softening of environmental regulations, it merits a screaming headline in *The New York Times*. But there is no psychological framework in place to absorb Bush's lack of interest in domestic anti-terrorism. The component details have been reported, but the larger story has passed by almost entirely unnoticed.

Grover Norquist, the Republican strategist par excellence, explains that Democrats cannot hurt Bush on homeland security because it sits at the intersection of two issues—crime and national security—where his party enjoys an advantage built up over decades. The public perception is that "Republicans are tough on crime to the point where they'll take away your civil liberties. Republicans are so tough on foreign policy that they'll flatten cities." Democrats, in other words, can't convince voters that Bush is soft on homeland security for the same reason Republicans can't convince voters they care about affordable health care more than about corporate profits. Some Democrats have speculated that Bush's opposition to tougher domestic security will become an issue if there is another major terrorist strike. But, as Norquist argues, "nobody heard the original requests" for more funding by the Democrats. And, if the Democrats do try to say, "I told you so," it will simply confirm the stereotype that, in times of crisis, rather than rally around the commander-in-chief, they blame the United States first.

The White House appears to grasp that Bush's standing on national security issues, especially after September 11, is so

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unassailable that he does not need to shore it up. Instead, the administration seems to view his wartime popularity as a massive bank of political capital from which they can withdraw and spend on other, unrelated causes. In the short run, this strategy is a political boon for Bush and his party. But, in the long run, it divides and weakens the nation against its external threats.

The most relevant historical example, invoked occasionally since September 11, is America's response to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Franklin Roosevelt decided that, in order to unite the country and to muster the resources to prosecute the war, he would shelve his ambitious domestic agenda. "Dr. New Deal," he later declared, had given way to "Dr. Win the War." The White House has studied this example, but it has gleaned precisely the opposite lesson. The administration's thinking once again finds its crassest expression in the person of Mitch Daniels. In an op-ed published a year ago, titled "A WARTIME BUDGET," Daniels cites the fact that, under Roosevelt, "non-war spending was slashed more than 20 percent. Among the early casualties were several of F.D.R.'s own inventions." From this analogy one might conclude that Bush would shelve his tax cuts, which drain away hundreds of billions of dollars in revenue that the government now desperately needs. But Daniels reasons from F.D.R.'s example not that Bush should curtail his domestic agenda—which, indeed, he has only pursued more aggressively—but rather that the *Democrats* should curtail *theirs*: "[T]he president has directed that all other activities of government must be constrained." Daniels proceeds to impugn the patriotism of all those who desire to spend more than Bush on domestic programs. "Washington is a capital overrun by vested interests whose livelihoods depend on extracting ever-increasing quantities of taxpayer dollars for their narrow causes," he writes. "It is not clear that they will subordinate their interests even to the needs of wartime."

This is indicative of the general Bush strategy of leveraging his status as a popular wartime leader to advance his non-war-related goals. Take the president's use of the Department of Homeland Security. When Lieberman first proposed creating such a department in October 2001, the administration opposed it. Then, last June, just as FBI whistle-blower Coleen Rowley finished her testimony about the FBI's mishandling of terror warnings, it announced that it would create such a department after all, even though the White House had only an embarrassingly vague proposal to offer at the time. Bush then seemed to go out of his way to ensure Democratic opposition. He demanded that department employees be stripped of civil servant protections—a surefire way to draw union opposition. Even though Bush himself had categorically opposed the creation of the department just months before, he immediately began telling audiences that any Democrats resisting his version were "not interested in the security of the American people." In the meantime, he spurned overtures from conservative Democrats, such as John Breaux, seeking a compromise. By opposing the department's creation at first and then resisting any compromise, Bush created the very delay he bemoaned as injurious to the national defense—but gave himself a political issue with which to club the Democrats.

THE TACTIC OF using the patriotic glow that has enveloped Bush since September 11 as a partisan cudgel has succeeded—most notably in winning back control of the Senate for the Republicans. But it has also left the partisan split in the country deeper than it was even before the World Trade Center fell. As liberal columnist E.J. Dionne has written in *The Washington Post*, "By using his popularity on foreign affairs to push for domestic policies that Democrats genuinely despise, [Bush] has made those in the opposition who actually support his objectives abroad look like chumps."

One manifestation of this split is intensified opposition to the war in Iraq. When you bring up the war with liberals—even those who supported past non-U.N.-sanctioned military actions in the Balkans—they cannot seem to get past their intense distrust and loathing of the president. Last summer, with Democrats buoyed by public concern over the economy and corporate scandals, a reporter asked Democratic campaign strategist Jim Jordan whether he anticipated Iraq overshadowing those concerns. Jordan replied, "You mean, when General Rove calls in the air strikes?" Jordan is far from the only Democrat suspicious of Bush's motives. Last September, a *Newsweek* poll asked if the White House was "*deliberately* using talk of war with Iraq to distract attention from other issues in this year's congressional elections." Thirty-seven percent of all respondents, including 55 percent of Democrats, replied yes. The president does not merit all the blame for this perception, of course: An inability to judge the merits of Bush's foreign policy, rather than merely the motives of Bush himself, represents a failure of imagination on the part of his critics. But Bush certainly merits some of the blame for the corrosive cynicism he has engendered. By using his wartime popularity to advance contentious political goals, he has made it inevitable that partisan division would spill into foreign policy.

What makes this all so depressing is that it's easy to imagine the different path Bush could have taken. Rather than use the war on terrorism as a pretext to ram through his preexisting agenda, he could have truly demanded a reordering of national priorities, with security taking precedence. No one should have expected him to transform himself into a New Democrat on September 12, 2001. But he could have scaled back part of his tax cut to make room for the homeland security increase that experts and members of both parties in Congress agreed was needed. He could have adopted Lieberman's homeland security proposal early on, rather than delaying for eight costly months and then wielding it as an election-season club. In short, he could have used his instant popularity to unify the country and safeguard it. President Bush is a clever politician who has astutely taken advantage of the opportunities offered to him by the changed climate of September 11, 2001. But the times don't demand a clever politician. They demand a leader. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Telling Stories

KOREA IS UNFOLDING SLOWLY for us—the South Korean film world, that is. For decades Koreans have been making films, around forty or fifty features a year, but few have been shown here other than at festivals or museums. I saw my first Korean film, *Shiri*, only in March of last year. I was surprised by its slickness, which was pure American spy-thriller slickness, a blatant imitation. Now arrives **CHIHWASEON (PAINTED FIRE)** (Kino), which could hardly be more exotic. It deals with a famous Korean artist of the nineteenth century who lived and worked in the midst of his country's political heavings. The picture is fraught with Korean culture for anyone (like me) ignorant of that culture; but, symmetrically ungrateful, I missed some of the *Shiri* trimness.

CHIHWASEON (PAINTED FIRE)
(Kino)

ALL THE REAL GIRLS
(Sony Pictures Classics)

The director was Im Kwon-Taek, who is a veteran. Born in 1936, he has been working in films since he was twenty and, in his country, is called the grand old man of his profession. This new film is said to be his ninety-fifth, and every detail of its execution shows his easy command—we feel that he couldn't direct clumsily. Im builds every scene, however short, with a plan of its structure; he handles his actors with that combination of control and evocation that marks the good director; he always focuses on the elements that we want most to see. With cinematography that is well up to current international high standards, Im makes us familiars of a world that is seductively beautiful yet socially strange. The homes and gardens invite us to be there; yet there is strangeness. Prostitutes are domestic companions, not mere hirelings. Equally strange, government officials are passionate about painting.

The screenplay, which Im wrote with a collaborator, tells the story of a painter called Ohwon. Im admits that few facts of Ohwon's life are known: the character outlines were there, and the story was largely induced from them. It begins in Seoul in 1882, with Ohwon's appearance before a high official. Questions arise about his background and training, and, flashing back, the film proceeds to answer them. The young Ohwon, a bit of a roughneck, is introduced to painting by masters, proceeds fast and furiously to fame, yet remains a roughneck. All through his life he drinks a lot, he womanizes, and he paints. (At one point he asks, "How can I paint without an erection?" I remembered the alleged remark of Pierre Renoir: "I paint with my penis.") High-level patronage is soon forthcoming, but Ohwon remains "difficult." He becomes what Westerners think of as the typical wild-man artist—Jackson Pollock, for instance. In fact, this behavior is a link of recognition between his story and us.

But the screenplay moves from episode to episode without much cumulation, only addition. Also, Im includes elements of Korean history—domestic riots, struggles with China and Japan—that obviously affected Ohwon's life but seem random jottings included here just because they could not be omitted. Through the curious narrative structure and the excursions into politics, we gradually suppose that we are being told a story by a Korean bard in the Korean manner, generically different from ours. (The exact opposite of *Shiri*.) A binding strength of the film is the performance of Choi Min-Sik as Ohwon: far from any fake-Barrymore antics, he makes us feel that we are intruding on the heat and genius of a man for whom life—existence as is possible in the world—is insufficient.

Peculiarly enough, a new American film has something of the same "Korean" approach to narrative. In **ALL THE REAL GIRLS** (Sony Pictures Classics), scene after scene arrives not at whiz-bang tempo but as if the director just had something more that he needed to tell us and that we would want to know. The difference between this film and Im's is that with the Korean picture we feel nativity—"this is the way they do it"; with the American film, we sense a conscious impulse to vary the usual.

The writer-director was David Gordon Green, now twenty-seven, and this is his second film. His first, *George Washington*, was about a modern pre-adolescent boy who is given that nickname by a girl, a story that gamboled nicely in small-town lyricism. His new film is also set in a small town—in North Carolina—and deals with people further along toward deeper joys and troubles, people in their late teens and early twenties.

The very first moment of *All the Real Girls* promises well. That first shot fades in. It's a quick fade-in, but the very use of it is so exceptional that it sparks our interest in what is to come. A director who begins in that heterodox way, we feel, is stating quietly that he means to take a fresh look at his subject. Which he does.

This is especially striking because the subject could hardly be less novel—the flowering and burdens of love. Paul is a good-looking young man who doesn't do much besides hanging out with his male friends and scoring with young women. His only relatively steady occupation is dressing in clown garb and accompanying his mother, similarly dressed, who earns a living by entertaining children in a nearby hospital. A local eighteen-year-old girl, Noel, comes back to town after six years at boarding school. She, we soon learn, is a virgin. She and Paul very soon fall in love. Paul, oddly enough, takes a sort of pride in loving a virgin. Yet part of the film's quiddity is that she sleeps with another man and thus, she says, learns how much she loves Paul.

But the details of the story, and the sure-handed sketches of Paul's friends, are not the basic theme of the film. Apart from Noel's virginity—well, not entirely apart—Green is showing us through all his people that ideas and perplexities that we might have thought of as urban are now fixed everywhere. Concerns, doubts, evasions that we connect chiefly with

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mixed-up city types, the people of *The Last Days of Disco* and *Igby Goes Down*, are now national. If we have still been stuck in the pattern of malaise in city life and clarity in small-town life, we can forget it, says Green. It was never true outside of conventional fiction, and that fiction, though it lasted much longer than we might have thought, is now defunct.

Green treats his people with affectionate knowledge, untinged with patronizing. And he sees them in ways that are free of cinematic cliché. Simple moments, like an angular embrace in the lane of a bowling alley or an overhead shot of a man and a boy lying next to each other on a lawn as they contemplate the sky, are modest but warm pleasures.

Zooey Deschanel has the needed gentleness as Noel. Paul Schneider has a good deal of the young Warren Beatty quality, the small-town rooster who is really not so pleased with himself. Patricia Clarkson, as his mother, rings true. ■

James Wood

The Unwinding Stair

Can literature be simple?

HERE ARE FOUR SENTENCES: "And it still seemed that there was some most important thing which he did not have, of which he once vaguely dreamed, and in the present he was stirred by the same hope for the future that he had had in childhood." "He began to play, himself not knowing what it was, but it came out plaintive and moving, and tears flowed down his cheeks . . . 'Ah, ah!' he said, as the tears crawled down his cheeks and splashed on his green frock-coat." "What was certain was that his own mother had never known him to embrace her, so she had never done the same to him either." "Ivan Ilyich's life was most ordinary, therefore most terrible."

The first is from Chekhov's story "The Bishop," and the second from "Rothschild's Fiddle." The terrifying line about how "what was certain was that his own mother had never known him to embrace her, so she had never done the same to him either" is from Giovanni Verga's great story "Rosso Malpelo," and the last sentence, of course, is from Tolstoy's novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. When we hear these lines, we hear the sound of simplicity: the direct access to deep emotion; the clarity of phrasing; the willingness to use vernacular and conversational language and repetition rather than obviously literary constructions; the sense that literary artifice has been pushed out of the way by the coarse elbow of metaphysics. There is a fearlessness in this writing, which in turn is fearful, a simplicity which in turn is complex.

We know that simplicity has always been an aesthetic ideal, because of the abundant testimony to it in ancient and modern literature; and we know that it is rarely achieved because of the abundant complexity with which it is idealized. Plato has Socrates, in the *Republic*, warn against such gratuities as Attic pastries and Corinthian girlfriends. These superfluities are likely to distract the soldier and to make him sick, he says, just as unnecessary embellishment in songs and in lyric odes gives rise to licentiousness. Simplicity, temperance, is all. Such notions are similarly found in the ancient treatises on rhetoric, such as Quintilian's.

In modern literature, however, simplicity is always elegiac. It is that which has been mysteriously lost, and which cannot be re-found. Simplicity is often honored in the breach, as in Yeats's little poem "The Fascination of What's Difficult," which complains about complexity:

> The fascination of what's difficult
> Has dried the sap out of my veins,
> and rent
> Spontaneous joy and natural content
> Out of my heart.

Many literary cultures seem to have their own favored examples of lost simplicity and fallen naturalness. Molière is sometimes invoked by the French, and Pushkin has long represented a founding simplicity for Russian writers. Gogol suggested that Pushkin was able to serve art for art's sake because, in some way, he had no complex anxiety about what art was: by contrast, "we can no longer serve art for art's sake," wrote Gogol, "without having first comprehended its highest purpose and without determining what it is given to us for. We cannot repeat Pushkin." The Czechs revere Jaroslav Hašek's easiness; Bohumil Hrabal marveled that Hašek's novel, *The Good Soldier Švejk*, was "written as though he tossed it off with his left hand, after a hangover, it's pure joy in writing." And Cervantes has functioned this way for writers as different as Flaubert, Dostoevsky, and Kundera.

All these writer-founders are idealized as somehow simple, at one with nature, almost premodern; they are envied because they are seen as unencumbered by artifice. Schiller's famous essay "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" is both the greatest example of this modern nostalgia and the most sharply self-aware and dialectical commentary on it. Schiller sees modern poets as writers who have lost an antique simplicity, one of whose components was a direct concord with nature. Modern writers, says Schiller, in their relationship to the ancients, are like sick people lusting after health. Goethe, he says, is rare and remarkable, because although he is a modern poet—and therefore a "sick" one—he still retains an extraordinary premodern simplicity and directness.

The "sickest" modern writer (in Schillerian terms) is Flaubert, and it is hardly surprising to find him groaning that Rabelais, Cervantes, and Molière had it easy because they were so simple. "They are great," he wrote to Louise Colet in 1853, "because they have no techniques." Those three writers "achieve their effects, regardless of Art." Of course, every reader of Cervantes knows that there is abundant "technique" in *Don Quixote*, and that Cervantes mobilizes all kinds of techniques that are premodern only because they had not yet been identified as techniques. They seem simple because they do not seem self-conscious. But for Flaubert this absence of artistic self-consciousness meant that these writers were mere beasts of instinct. He felt that he could not be free as they were. "One achieves style," he wrote, "only by atrocious labor, a fanatic and dedicated stubbornness."

Flaubert was not only a sick modern, but one who infected everyone who came after him. He does indeed represent a watershed. After Flaubert, style in fiction will always be a problem, always a trapped decision, because it is an overwhelmingly aesthetic one. Even simplicity, after Flaubert, is no longer

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innocent, but is a simplicity that has become weary of congestion. (Think of Hemingway's intensely self-conscious and artful simplicity.) Nothing is more nostalgic for aesthetic innocence than Flaubert's story "A Simple Heart," in which he tried to prove that he could use his aestheticism to achieve a fable-like purity. And the moderns know it too: both Robbe-Grillet and Sarraute, those exponents of the *nouveau roman*, used to say that without doubt Flaubert was their "precursor."

II.

WHAT IS REMARKABLE ABOUT Verga and Chekhov, who wrote at about the same time—in the 1880s and 1890s—is that they seem to have evaded this law of modern sickness. They seem to say, as George Herbert does in his poem "Jordan": "Is there in truth no beauty?/Is all good structure in a winding stair?" They unwind the stair of modern complexity. They lived after Flaubert, and both had read him, but they wrote as if they had never read him. They are simple, but without the modern fascination with innocence, without the modern nostalgia for simplicity. Indeed, Chekhov in some ways represents the "solution" to all of Flaubert's dilemmas. If realism was a stylistic agony for Flaubert, it was a moral necessity for Chekhov. If Flaubert retained and aestheticized an essentially religious and judgmental disdain for life, Chekhov paganized life. If Flaubert's people are all mistakes, Chekhov's are all always forgiven. If Flaubert's characters are doomed, Chekhov's are merely imprisoned.

Chekhov, as all readers feel, has an extraordinary natural and simple charm, which is inseparable from his gentle and comic temperament. But what is the literary nature of his simplicity? What attributes does it possess that make it so attractive to we sick moderns? We can see it in operation in one of his stories, "Rothschild's Fiddle," written in 1894. In this tale, we are introduced to Jacob, a miserly coffin-maker. The story begins: "It was a small town, more miserable than a village and almost all the inhabitants were old people, who died so rarely it was even annoying." Jacob cares about nothing but profit and loss. When he makes expensive coffins, for women and gentry, he gets out his iron rule, and measures with great attention to exact size. But he is never keen to make children's coffins, because they pay so poorly. He would manufacture them contemptuously and carelessly without measuring them, writes Chekhov, complaining all the while that he could not be bothered with such trifles.

From time to time, the town's Jewish band, which usually played weddings, would ask him to play the fiddle—out of necessity, since neither the band nor Jacob enjoyed the experience. Jacob had to sit next to a man called Rothschild, named, writes Chekhov, with some sarcasm, "after the noted millionaire. Now this bloody little Jew contrived to play the merriest tunes in lachrymose style. For no obvious reason Jacob became more and more obsessed by hatred and contempt for Jews, and for Rothschild in particular. He started picking on him and swearing at him."

The extraordinary brutality of the narration continues: "On the sixth of May in the previous year Martha had suddenly fallen ill. The old woman breathed heavily, drank a lot of water, was unsteady on her feet, but she would still do the stove herself of a morning, and even fetch the water." Jacob suffers his first stirring of remorse, as he realizes that he may soon be without a wife: "As he looked at the old woman, it vaguely occurred to Jacob that for some reason he had never shown her any affection all his life." But, ever practical, he measures her for her coffin, and enters his wife in his debit book: "Martha Ivanova: one coffin, two roubles, forty-nine copecks." Jacob and Martha go to the hospital, but the doctor shrugs his shoulders and sends them home, telling Martha that she has done well to get this far and now it is her time to die. A few days later, she does die, succinctly appraised by Chekhov thus: "The priest came and gave the last rites, whereupon Martha mumbled something or other. By morning she was gone."

Returning from her funeral, Jacob has what amounts to a revelation. Again he reflects that in fifty-two years of marriage he had never shown any love for his wife, that in "all that time, he had no more noticed her than a cat or dog." But his remorse is interrupted by Rothschild, who has been sent by the bandleader to ask Jacob to play at a wedding. They are in need of a fiddler. Jacob turns on Rothschild and attacks him. "Scared to death," Rothschild runs away, pursued by a dog and some street urchins shouting, "Dirty Yid!" Jacob walks alongside the river, and, sitting for a moment, he reflects upon real losses, not just the pecuniary ones. As Jacob mourns his losses, the reader gathers that he and Martha suffered a real loss when they were young—that of a baby. And suddenly we think back to the story's opening page, and Chekhov's sentence about how Jacob made children's coffins contemptuously and carelessly. What had seemed, in our readerly innocence, an economic contempt—since children's coffins bring in less cash—is disclosed as the desperate repression of grief. Now we know why Jacob cannot stand the way that Rothschild plays his flute, making all the cheerful tunes sound lachrymose. Jacob fears true feeling.

The next morning he himself feels sick, and goes to the hospital, and with the same fatalism with which he attended his wife's death he prepares for his own. "He reckoned that death would be pure gain to him. He wouldn't have to eat, drink, pay taxes, or offend people. And since a man lies in his grave not just once but hundreds and thousands of years, the profit would be colossal. Man's life is debit, his death credit." Thinking of all this, "he started playing he knew not what, but it came out poignantly moving and tears coursed down his cheeks." Just then Rothschild comes to his door, terrified, but again sent to ask Jacob to play. Jacob does not hit him this time, he merely says that it's no good, he won't be able to play because he is ill. "He again struck up, his tears spurting on to the fiddle. Rothschild listened carefully, standing sideways on, arms crossed on his breast. His scared, baffled look slowly gave way to a sorrowful, suffering expression. He rolled his eyes as if in anguished delight. 'Ah, ah!' he said as the tears crawled down his cheeks and splashed on his green frock-coat." On his deathbed, that evening, Jacob asks the priest to ensure that his fiddle is given to Rothschild.

IT IS A VERY BEAUTIFUL STORY, AND it shows us how great simplicity founds itself on the defiance of much that is considered conventionally literary. Our soft scruples instruct us that literature should avoid the didactic, the sentimental, the clichéd, the repetitive. But here is Chekhov being all those things, and without apology. "Why are people generally such a nuisance to each other? . . . Without the hate and malice folks could get a lot of profit out of each other." And here is his customary hospitality towards cliché and repetition: "scared to death," "his heart missed a beat and he felt sorry," and so on. (These were the "prosaicisms" in Chekhov that so irritated the aesthete Nabokov.)

But this is a story very concerned with false measure and the proper overflowing of measure. Jacob learns to go beyond the rules—both the "iron rule" of his craft and the iron rule of his emotional life. His tears,

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as Shakespeare has it in a different context, "o'erflow the measure," splashing onto his fiddle. In such a story, simplicity itself overflows our nice little literary containers, our protocols, our fine laws, and our genial conventions of artifice.

If this story's simplicity is in some sense anti-literary, then it is most anti-literary in its mode of narration. Listen again to the story's opening sentence: "It was a small town, more miserable than a village and almost all the inhabitants were old people, who died so rarely it was even annoying." "Who died so rarely it was even annoying": clearly, this opening sentence, the one that conventionally sets the scene, is written as if thought by Jacob the coffin-maker. It is Jacob who thinks that the town's niggardly rate of death is annoying, because he wants to make ever more coffins. So immediately, at a moment when an authorial omniscience is more usual—"the town consisted of three streets and one large manor house" and so on—Chekhov begins by telling the story from within Jacob's head, and in Jacob's own language. Of course, he does not stay exclusively inside Jacob's head. Instead, he combines ordinary third-person narration with narration from within inside Jacob's head.

The technical term for this kind of writing is free indirect style, which is really a way of paraphrasing something that would ordinarily be written directly, and of paraphrasing it in the language of one particular character. In its simplest form, it allows novelists to avoid having to represent all speech within quotation marks, and all scenes as actually happening at the moment that they are described. Here is an example of ordinary speech: "Bob shouted at Tom: 'And you can go to hell, but no, not your wife, because hell would be too good for her.'" And here is free indirect style: "That was the day when Bob had told Tom to go—what did he say? Was it hell? Yes, and then the words he spoke about Jane and how hell would be too good for her. Well, at least Tom now knew what Bob really felt." In my example, it is clear that Bob's direct speech is being indirectly represented, and represented from inside Tom's head, from Tom's point of view. But my example tells us little about Tom. If I were to write: "That was the melancholy day when Robert had requested that Thomas go to hell," we might begin to think that Thomas was rather pompous, and that he had something to hide, by not mentioning Bob's comment about his wife.

Free indirect style becomes a profound technique—to use Flaubert's word—when, as in the case of Chekhov's story, it is hardly signaled at all, and barely perceptible, and yet infects the very language and bias of the narration. We are prompted by the merest word or phrase to see a bias, a tilt, an allegiance, in a sentence that otherwise looks like normal third-person authorial omniscience. When Chekhov writes, "He was known as Rothschild after the noted millionaire. Now this bloody little Jew even contrived to play the merriest tunes in lachrymose style," we know perfectly well that the first sentence, about Rothschild being named after the noted millionaire, is written by Chekhov, and that the second one is spoken by Jacob, the anti-Semite, because only Jacob would use the phrase "bloody little Jew." But what of this: "On the sixth day of May in the previous year Martha had suddenly fallen ill. The old woman breathed heavily, drank a lot of water, was unsteady on her feet, but she could still do the stove herself of a morning, and even fetch the water." The brevity of the description, the lack of interest and compassion, the vested interest in Martha's continued domestic functioning, the very idea that to describe Martha's ailments all that will be needed is to say that

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"she breathed heavily and drank a lot of water"—all this suggests that this picture of poor Martha is really seen as if from Jacob's cruel eyes. And later Chekhov writes: "The priest came and gave the last rites, whereupon Martha mumbled something or other. By morning she was gone."

"Martha mumbled something or other": this is how Jacob would describe the scene, were he speaking it, perhaps to himself. And if some of us might feel that it is not exactly how Jacob would put it, we could say instead that Chekhov here finds a third vantage, a third point of view from which to tell his story: he writes as if someone in the community were describing the event—without formality, fullness of detail, or, for that matter, compassion. It is a style that perfectly matches both Jacob and his wretched little town, a place of cruelty, fatalism, and speedy injustice.

CHEKHOV'S USE OF FREE INDIRect speech is exceptionally delicate, and the more one searches for it, the more one sees that it really constitutes the fabric of his storytelling, his special way of siding with his characters, of merging with them, of seeing the world as they see it, without judgment. It is far from simple, of course, but then simplicity is always a matter of complex technique. Yet it is a technique that results in simplicity, because, in issuing from within the vision and language of a character, it tends away from literary narration and towards the idea of spoken narration.

More, this way of telling stories runs against the conventional literary idea that we read in order to know. If it is the fitting style for a community that is cruel, it is because it is the fitting style for a community whose cruelty has to do with its not being interested in comprehension. The doctor who turns Martha away simply feels that she has lived her three score and ten. Her husband has always treated her like a cat or a dog, barely noticing her. Martha is not worth investigation. And doesn't Chekhov's story decide the same, really? "Whereupon Martha mumbled something or other." Martha is seen as fundamentally unknowable, because not worth the trouble of knowledge.

Chekhov uses a technique of storytelling that mimics incuriosity: from deep inside the incurious mind of one character, he lets us look at another character and see in her only the cloudiest outline. We might say that this style of Chekhov's, so common in his stories, is founded on the management of incomprehension. That is not to say, of course, that we do not learn anything from reading Chekhov, or that in this instance we do not learn quite a lot about Jacob or about his town in the course of the story; merely that in order to do so we are made to travel through his lack of comprehension, inhabit his cloud of unknowing.

III.

HOW THIS SIMPLICITY DIFFERS from literary complexity can be seen by comparing Chekhov to Henry James. James is also a great controller of free indirect style (which might be called "point of view," James's great obsession), but it is generally essential for James that the character from whose eyes we see and interpret gathering events is finally also a source of deep understanding. James's characters, in this sense, are all readers—it is what links him with Jane Austen, for all that he seems to have disliked her work. Think of James's Isabel Archer, or of Austen's Fanny Price: they become readers of their situations, highly literate hermeneuts of the material that we, too, are reading. And of course this is deeply satisfying, because the experience offers the satisfactions of complexity. But Chekhov is almost the opposite: we learn how to read the unreading, the hermeneutical illiteracy, of his characters. If James's ideal point of view is that of the reader, Chekhov's is that of the speaker.

Both this story and Verga's great and terrifying tale "Rosso Malpelo" seem almost cruel. Certainly, both writers belonged to societies that, by late nineteenth-century bourgeois standards, really were cruel. Giovanni Verga was born in Sicily in 1840. At the end of the nineteenth century, Sicily was probably the poorest place in Europe. Verga was a patrician, born into a landowning family in Catania. At school, a patriotic teacher inspired him to write fiery and romantic works, and his early novels, the so-called *romanzi giovenili,* were popular and sentimental, influenced by the most vivid storytellers of the day—Dumas, Hugo, Scott. But around 1880, partly influenced by Luigi Capuana, Verga began to experiment with a new kind of writing, a style that came to be called *verismo.* This is sometimes said to be the Italian counterpart of French naturalism, and Verga had indeed read Zola; but although Verga and Chekhov never knew of each other's existence, the Sicilian sounds more like the Russian than like the Frenchman.

Verga took as his new subjects shepherds and illiterate fishermen. The style of narration is as if written by a peasant—more exactly, as if written by the village community. Scholars of Verga call this "narration by the village chorus." The stories and the novels that he wrote in the 1880s abound with non sequiturs, proverbial sayings, and pieces of nonsensical folk wisdom, sometimes spoken by his characters and sometimes woven invisibly into the narration. "Some people carry their conscience on their backs, so they can't see it." "Saint Joseph shaved himself first and then the others." "Uncle Crocifisso was in just the right mood to discuss that business, which never seemed to end, because, as they say, 'long things turn into snakes.'" "Marriages and bishops are made in heaven."

Since these stories are narrated as if by a member of the community, they themselves at first glance seem to be without much mercy for their protagonists. But of course these stories are not cruel. Both Chekhov and Verga are masters of the antisentimental principle; they know that the more brutally they deprive their characters of obvious sympathy, the more we long to apply it covertly. Verga knowingly uses the cruelty of his Sicilian world to provoke the reader's sympathy.

The best example of this method in Verga's work is "Rosso Malpelo." This story is about a little boy who works in the mines under Mount Etna. Rosso's father was also a miner, and he died in a terrible accident underground. Ever since, Rosso has been a problem—a vicious, pathetic, feral child, shunned by the rest of the community. His name, Malpelo, literally means "evil-haired"; he is so nicknamed because he has red hair, and the community has the usual folk-suspicion of people with red hair. This is how the story begins: "He was called Malpelo because he had red hair, and he had red hair because he was a mischievous rascal who promised to turn out a real knave. So everyone at the sand mine called him Malpelo, and even his mother, hearing him always referred to in that way, had almost forgotten the name he was christened with."

Evil because he had red hair, red hair because he was evil: the story begins with a non sequitur, an illogicality, a circularity. And the story is founded on this non sequitur, because we rapidly gather that the community, which is in effect telling this tale, has no interest in knowing Rosso Malpelo. He is too difficult to deal with. He has been cast out. For the community, to know him is to blame him. Verga takes to an even greater pitch of extremity Chekhov's principle of denying or frustrating access; in some amazing way Verga's story is found-

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ed on the impossibility of knowing Rosso Malpelo. Verga writes that the miners beat Malpelo "even when he was not to blame, on the grounds that if Malpelo was not responsible, he was quite capable of having done it." And Malpelo accepts this regime of the vicious non sequitur. When he is beaten for a crime he did not commit, he never denies it, but merely shrugs and says: "What's the use? I'm Malpelo."

Certainly, Malpelo is nasty. He is (as we would say) an abused abuser. His father died in the mine, smothered by sand, and his mother shrinks from her son. The narrator adds that "his own mother had never known him to embrace her, so that she had never done the same to him either," a terrifying line, given out with all of Verga's usual brusque simplicity. But this is also the very principle of the story's narration, which effectively insists on the unembraceability of Malpelo, so that the reader desires to embrace him instead. The only thing that Malpelo understands is force. He beats the poor mule that works underground, muttering, "That'll kill you off more quickly." In some way Malpelo wants to be dead, and wants everyone else to be dead, too. Like his father, he emits a guttural groan, "Ah, ah!" as he works at the sand, the exclamation sounding like a death cry. When a new boy arrives at the mine, Malpelo takes him under his wing and begins to tutor him in the ways of cruelty. He tells him: "The mule gets beaten because it can't fight back, and if it could, it would trample us under its feet and steal the food out of our mouths." When the mule eventually dies, Malpelo comments: "It would have been better for him if he'd never been born at all."

The new boy at the mine is cruelly nicknamed The Frog, because he once fell off some scaffolding and dislocated his leg: "When he was carrying his basket of sand on his back, the poor wretch would hop along as if he was dancing the tarantella, and all the mineworkers laughed at him and called him The Frog." As elsewhere in his work, Verga here flourishes a cruelty, told entirely from within the terms and the values of the mine community, but prompts us to defy the cruel laughter of the men—and therefore the laughter of Verga's own narration—with that epithet, "poor wretch." And Verga means us to do likewise with Malpelo. Malpelo is a poor wretch too, even if no one will acknowledge it.

In the story's most awful series of scenes, The Frog, whose health is poor, is taken ill. Malpelo considers The Frog a sissy, and boasts of his own strength. He tries to force some health into The Frog by hitting him, but he hits him so hard that The Frog begins to cough blood. Malpelo is alarmed: "He swore that he could not have done him any great harm by hitting him as he did, and just to prove it he beat himself severely about the chest and the back with a large stone."

But The Frog is seriously ill, and he is taken to his bed, where he wheezes for breath, and begins to wither away. Malpelo visits the boy, and sits staring at him, "with those huge eyes of his bulging out of his forehead, as though he was going to paint his portrait." Malpelo is bewildered by the boy's failing health, and thinks that he is being self-indulgent. He cannot understand why The Frog's mother is weeping so much, and asks The Frog why his mother is making such a fuss, "when for two months he had been earning less than it cost to feed him." After all, Malpelo's mother has never once embraced him. "But The Frog paid no attention to him, and simply seemed intent on lying there in bed."

I remember first reading that last sentence, and then slowly, almost frightenedly returning to it, and reading it once again: "But the Frog paid no attention to him, and simply seemed intent on lying there in bed." Of course, this makes it sound as if The Frog is choosing to luxuriate in bed, as if he had a choice, when in fact he is dying. He is not indolent, he is chained by his fate to his bed. The sentence is presented as third-person narration by Verga, but it must represent the thought of Malpelo, to whom The Frog's bedriddenness seems a perplexing luxury. And in this bleak story death is a kind of luxury, since it is a relief from work, from life. The Frog dies, and a little later Malpelo gets lost in one of the labyrinthine mine shafts that stretch under the volcano, and he is "never heard of again." It would indeed have been better if he had never been born at all.

As in Chekhov, Verga's use of this narration-as-if-by-the-community is extraordinarily subtle, because readers, faced with such pitiless judgment, tend to work against the narration, against the community, in order to extract the pathos we require. Verga uses a style of writing in which the writer appeals to something consensual that everyone knows. Roland Barthes used to call this the "reference code," and it is common in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction. Tolstoy habitually uses it with great simplicity and force. In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, he describes a group

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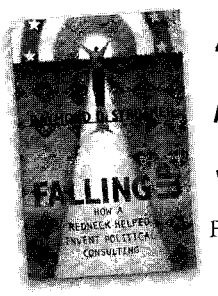

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of men who are discussing the recent news of Ivan's death. Tolstoy remarks that, "as is usual in such cases," each man was thinking that he was glad that it was Ivan Ilyich who was dead and not him. In such an instance, we are encouraged to agree with Tolstoy about this universal fact of life.

But Verga uses the "reference code" to effect almost the opposite reaction, almost disagreement, because the familiar truths and the universal facts with which we are asked to concur are so cruel, and so brutally stated, that the reader is forced to rise up against them. The most blatant example in "Rosso Malpelo" might be the passage where Verga describes how Rosso lovingly looked after the shoes of his dead father: "He carefully hung the shoes on the same nail where he kept his pallet, as though they were the Pope's slippers, and on Sundays he would take them down, polish them and try them on. Then he would place them on the floor, one beside the other, and stare at them for hours on end with his elbows on his knees and his chin resting in the palms of his hands, and it was anybody's guess what ideas were running through that calculating little head of his." Of course, we are being prompted by the story to resist this cruelty; we strongly suspect that although Rosso may be a monster, he is looking at the shoes and simply grieving for his father.

In both Verga and Chekhov, then, simplicity is achieved by using complex literary techniques to break through literary complexity. You might say that literature is used against itself. Of course, simplicity will always be complex in literature, because literary effects are always complex. But literary results are not always complex. The great artists of complexity, such as James and Mann and Proust, are always giving us a great deal—of themselves, of their intellects, of their prose, of their gathered data. But one way of looking at the simplicity of Chekhov and Verga is to note how much they subtract, how little they give us, how often they invite us to fill their bareness with our own feeling.

Note how, for instance, in both stories, characters are described in terms of the simplest exclamations: the tearful grunts of appreciation given by the Jew in "Rothschild's Fiddle": "Ah, ah!" And the similar groans—"Ah, ah!"—that both Rosso and his father give when they are digging away at the sand. Eliot once wrote an essay about the difference between Dryden's version of *Antony and Cleopatra* and Shakespeare's. He was interested in the death of Charmian, and in the way each poet treated her last two lines. Both poets had similar verse, except that Shakespeare had added to the couplet two extra words: "Ah, soldier!" Eliot said that he could not quite identify why this was great, but that he knew that in this addition lay the secret of great literature. I think, after reading Chekhov and Verga, we know that secret. "Ah, soldier"; "Ah," "Oh"—just two vowels. It is the very sigh of simplicity. ■

Bernard Knox
Simple Breath and Crystal

SELECTED POEMS
By Giuseppe Ungaretti
Translated, annotated, and with an introduction by Andrew Frisardi
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 287 pp., $30)

LATE IN HIS LONG CAREER, Giuseppe Ungaretti, reminiscing about his early life, wrote that his first poems, published in the Milan journal *Lacuba*, "are what my poems would be later, that is, poems that have their base in a psychological state dependent on my biography. I don't know how to dream poetically if it is not based on my direct experience." And when, in 1942, Mondadori began the publication of Ungaretti's complete works, the first volume, the poems, was given the title *Vita di un uomo*, or *A Man's Life*. With this in mind, Andrew Frisardi has accompanied his sensitive translations with an introduction that combines helpful discussion of the poet's literary context with a biographical sketch, adding a detailed chronology of the poet's life and work as well as notes that provide many extracts from Ungaretti's own remarks on the connection of his poems with his life. This is a valuable and skillfully accomplished volume, and for those not acquainted with Ungaretti's uncommonly beautiful verse it is the ideal introduction. It is to be hoped that Frisardi will follow it with a further selection, to give an even broader view of the achievement of one of Italy's greatest poets.

When Ungaretti was born in Alexandria in 1888, Egypt was in effect a British possession, and Alexandria had been a base for the British navy since 1883. It was a genuinely cosmopolitan city. Napoleonic occupation had left a significant cultural legacy—Ungaretti attended a French *lycée* and learned French well enough to publish a small book of poems in that language. There was a large and influential Greek element in the city; Cavafy began to circulate his poems on broadsheets among his friends in 1912, the year the young Ungaretti left for France. There was also an Italian sector of the city, where Ungaretti's mother, after the death of his father, a worker on the Suez Canal, ran a bakery and brought up Giuseppe and his younger brother Constantino.

His French education opened the doors for the young student to the world of the poets who had pioneered new themes and new music—Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Laforgue, Mallarmé—so that when, at the age of twenty-four, Ungaretti arrived in the city of Apollinaire, Picasso, Braque, and the other luminaries of Parisian culture, he felt at home. Apollinaire became a close friend. It is not surprising, for this reason, that Ungaretti's first poems in Italian were spare, astringent, free of the bombastic grandiloquence that was characteristic of Gabriele D'Annunzio, the fashionable poet of the time, and free also of the elaborate patterns of end rhyme that are possible in Italian because almost every word in the language concludes in a vowel.

But it was not just the French influence that shaped Ungaretti's new style. In May 1915, Italy entered the Great War on the Allied side, and soon Ungaretti was an infantryman in the trenches facing Austrian higher positions in the mountainous area of the Carso. Many years later he was to write: "The war suddenly revealed to me the language [of my own voice as a poet]. That is, I had to speak quickly because time was limited . . . I had to express in a few words . . . an extraordinary intensity of meaning." This was exemplified in the poem "Veglia," or "Vigil," dated December 15, 1915. Here it is in Frisardi's careful translation:

Bernard Knox is the author, most recently, of BACKING INTO THE FUTURE: THE CLASSICAL TRADITION AND ITS RENEWAL *(W.W. Norton).*

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An entire night
thrown down
beside a
butchered
companion with his
grimacing
mouth turned
to the full moon
with his congested hands
thrust
into my silence
I wrote
letters full of love

I have never held
so hard
to life

THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF Ungaretti's poems is probably the most bizarre story of a new poet's arrival. It was an edition of eighty copies printed in Udine in 1916 under the title *Il Porto Sepolto* (*The Buried Harbor*), and it was published by Ettore Serra, an officer to whom Ungaretti had mentioned his poems. "I told him that I had no other relief but to search for and find myself in some words," Ungaretti recalled, "and that this was my way of making progress as a human being." But "to tell the truth," he further explained, "those pieces of paper—postage-exempt postcards, margins of old newspapers, white spaces in cherished letters I had received—on which for two years day by day, I had been examining my conscience, sticking them afterwards helter-skelter into my knapsack, carrying them to live with me in the mud of the trenches, or making myself a pillow out of them during rare breaks, were not destined for any public.... The lieutenant however carried off my knapsack, put into order the scraps of paper, and brought me one day, when we had finally taken San Michele, the proofs of my *Porto Sepolto*."

In the spring of 1918, Ungaretti's regiment was transferred to the Western front, and at the end of the war he took up residence in Paris. In the next year he published a small volume of poems in French—most of them short, several consisting of only one line—titled *La Guerre* (*The War*). It was dedicated to Apollinaire, whom, when Ungaretti returned to Paris, he had found "dead, his face covered with black cloth, and his wife crying and his mother crying."

In 1919, Ungaretti became the Paris correspondent of Mussolini's newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia*. They had met shortly before the war, when Mussolini was a leading Socialist agitator and journalist and Ungaretti had come to believe that fascism was "a movement for gaining rights for exploited Italian workers, restoring order and self-respect to a badly fragmented postwar Italy, and preserving tradition in industrialized Italian society." This, as Frisardi points out, was an illusion that many other Italian writers shared, and in any case there is not the faintest hint in Ungaretti's poems or letters that he approved of Mussolini's imperialist ambitions, and eventually his opposition to the regime's racist laws got him into trouble. He severed his connection with Mussolini's newspaper in 1920, after his first volume of Italian poetry, *L'Allegria* (*Joy*), was published in Florence.

That book contained some seventy poems, of which Frisardi has translated twenty-seven. Twenty-two of them have dates and locations that fix them as products of wartime. In the other five poems we can see the future of Ungaretti's poetry; unlike the war poems, they give no context, and bare poetic statement is replaced with the expression of meaning by means of minute, gem-like images. As in "Agonía" ("Agony"):

To die like skylarks thirsty
over the mirage

Or like the quail
after crossing the sea
inside the first bushes
because it has no wish
to fly any more

But not to live lamenting
Like a goldfinch blinded

In the original, these dark thoughts are couched in an extraordinarily melodious language that combines discreet alliteration and subtle assonance to produce an extraordinary verbal music—a preview of the style of Ungaretti's next volume, *Sentimento del Tempo* (*A Sense of Time*), which appeared in 1933.

In the meantime Ungaretti married a Parisian woman, Jeanne Dupois, and moved to Rome, where he worked for the bulletin of the Foreign Ministry and also as a correspondent for a Turin newspaper; his daughter Ninon was born in 1925 and his son Antonietto in 1930, the year his mother died. All this time he was re-reading and learning from the classics of Italian poetry, about which he gave lectures, and working on the poems of *Sentimento*. In 1932, the year before it appeared, he was awarded the Premio del Gondoliere by the city of Venice, the first public recognition of his stature as a poet.

THE FOLLOWING YEAR SAW THE appearance of *Sentimento*. As Frisardi rightly claims in his introduction, "we find, in *Sentimento*, in addition to the blunt, concrete diction of *L'Allegria*, a modernist grandiloquence; broken syntactical units have been transformed into a more fluid, complex organization... and staccato phrasing has become mellifluous speech." He cites the first two lines of the opening poem as an example—*Dall' ampia ansia dell' alba/ Svelata albertura*—which he justifiably describes as "mind-bogglingly beautiful," and also "untranslatable." But he is a translator, and so he must attempt the impossible: "Out of daybreak's huge and restless hunger/Trees—like masts—revealed." This gives the sense, but much of the music has escaped.

Of the seventy poems in this collection, Frisardi chooses thirty; and they give a balanced picture of the various new elements in Ungaretti's poetic vision, notably the introduction of classical mythology—sirens, Diana "stepping from the spare palm grove/in a fleet gown of light," a "nymph/ asleep on her feet, her arms around an elm." Later in the volume these figures are joined by characters from the Bible—Cain, among others—and Christian ideas appear, too, though they are always expressed in characteristically vivid and compact imagery. One poem, "La pietà" ("Mercy"), which was written in 1925, the year in which Ungaretti returned to the religion in which he had been reared, is, as he himself remarked, "the first resolute manifestation of my return to the Christian faith." It was written in the monastery of Subiaco, where he spent Holy Week, and its message is not comforting:

God, consider our frailty.

We would like a certainty.

Do you not even mock us anymore?

Well then, pity us, cruelty.

In another poem, "La preghiera" ("Prayer"), Ungaretti offers an even grimmer view of human life in an unforgettable image:

Life to him is an enormous weight
As down there the dead bee's wing

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To the ant that drags it.

Yet the lines that follow sound a different note:

From that which lasts to that which passes.
Lord, unwavering dream,
Renew your covenant.

Oh! Soothe these sons and daughters.

And "La madre" ("The Mother"), dated 1930 and "written on the occasion of my mother's death," takes an even gentler tone:

And when with a final beat my heart
Brings down the wall of shadow
To lead me, Mother, as far as the Lord,
You'll lend me a hand as before.

You'll be on your knees, resolute,
A statue in front of the Eternal,
The way he used to see you
When you were still living....

And only after he has pardoned me
Will you have the desire to look at me.

You'll remember you've waited long for my arrival
And a rapid sighing will fill your eyes.

THE DEFINITIVE EDITION OF *Sentimento* was published in 1935, and in the same year Ungaretti and his family moved to São Paulo in Brazil, where he had been appointed a professor of Italian literature and language. In the following year he was saddened by the news of the death of his brother Constantino, and in 1939 he was shattered by the death of his nine-year-old son Antonietto. Three years later Ungaretti was appointed professor of contemporary Italian literature at the University of Rome, and there he lived through the collapse of the Italian army, the German occupation, the Allied bombing raids, and the Allied occupation.

Some of the turmoil and the sorrow of those events finds expression in the poems of his next collection, *Il Dolore* (*Affliction*), which appeared in 1947 and, as Ungaretti remarked, was "particularly inspired by the tragedy of those years." As, for example, in "L'angelo del povero" ("The Poor Man's Angel"):

Now that the harsher mercy of blood and earth
Fills our darkened minds,
Now that the silence of so many unjust deaths
Judges us at every heartbeat,

Now let the poor man's angel waken,
The soul's enduring gentleness...

With the undying gesture of the ages
May he alight before his ancient people,
In the midst of shadows...

But the most poignant *dolore* was the loss of his son. "Having lost a nine-year-old boy," Ungaretti writes, "I know that death is death in an extremely brutal way. It was the most terrible event of my life. I know what death means, I knew it even before; but then, when the best part of me was ripped away, I experienced death in myself, from that moment on. *Il Dolore* is the book I love most, the book I wrote in the horrible years, a lump in my throat.... That pain will never stop tormenting me." One long poem, "Giorno per giorno" ("Day by Day"), is entirely devoted to the death of his son.

Where is it now, where's the naive voice
Which, racing echoing through rooms
Eased the worries of a weary man?...
Earth undid it, a storybook
Past preserves it...

I search the sky for your happy face
And may my eyes see nothing else in me
When God is moved to close them too...

And, from another poem, "Tu ti spezzasti" ("You Were Broken"):

You used to hold your arms out like wings
And give back birth to wind
Running into the heavy unmoving air.

No one ever saw your weightless
Dancing foot stand still.

Happy grace
You were not able to break
Against a blindness so implacable
You simple breath and crystal,

Too human flash of light for the pitiless,
Savage, unrelenting, droning
Roar of a naked sun.

IN THE POSTWAR YEARS UNGARETTI began to produce a series of brilliant translations: forty of Shakespeare's sonnets, Racine's *Phèdre*, a volume of translations of writers "from Gongora to Mallarmé." And 1950 saw the publication of his next collection, *La Terra Promessa* (*The Promised Land*). Frisardi gives two items from this book, one of them a selection from a long poem called "Cori descritivi di stati d'animo di Didone" ("Choruses Descriptive of Dido's States of Mind"); and they are powerful lines that, according to Ungaretti, "would dramatically describe the departure of the last glimmers of youth from a person, or from a civilization.... The intention here is to give the physical experience of the drama [of Dido's passion], with reappearance of happy moments, vague uncertainties, and alarmed senses of shame, in the midst of being delirious over a passion that is seen perishing and becoming repellent, desolating, deserted." In 1958, the year of Ungaretti's seventieth birthday, his wife died, and her presence haunts the book titled *Il taccuino del vecchio* ("The Old Man's Notebook").

Without impatience I'll dream,
I'll bend to the task
That can never end,
And little by little at the tips
Of reborn arms
Succoring hands will reopen,
The eyes reappeared
In their sockets will give light again
And, suddenly intact,
You'll have resurrected, your voice
Will be my guide again,
I'm seeing you again forever.

In the splendid introduction to his exceedingly valuable book, Frisardi quotes from an article that Ungaretti wrote for the *Gazzetta del Popolo* in Turin in 1930. It "describes," Frisardi writes, "how after the war he set to work on assimilating the Italian poets Jacapone, Cavalcanti, Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Leopardi and others—not, he says, for literary research. 'I was looking for the song in them ... the song of the Italian language.' And: 'it was my heartbeat I wanted to feel in harmony with the heartbeat of my betters from a desperately loved land.'" If any modern poet can be said to have found the song of the Italian language, it is Giuseppe Ungaretti, who in poem after poem, no matter how lachrymose its theme, creates a verbal music that will continue to enchant and to resound wherever Italian is spoken and poetry is read. ■

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Jeffrey Herf

Amnesty and Amnesia

ADENAUER'S GERMANY AND THE NAZI PAST: THE POLITICS OF AMNESTY AND INTEGRATION
By Norbert Frei
Translated by Joel Golb
(Columbia University Press, 365 pp., $35)

IN THIS GRIM ACCOUNT OF THE formative years of West German democracy, the German historian Norbert Frei examines legislation affecting the amnesty and the integration of Germans suspected of, accused of, and in many cases indicted for crimes committed during the Nazi era. In so doing, he fills a gap in the existing scholarship and offers much evidence with which to think about how this democracy faced—or rather avoided facing—the criminal past. What was the connection between amnesty and integration, on the one hand, and the legitimation and installation of West German democracy, on the other? Was a different path to democratization—one filled with extensive trials and purges and revelations of the extent of Nazi criminality, conducted by German prosecutors and judges in the 1950s, when memories were "only" a decade old—not only conceivable but practicable? Frei's purpose is not to raise such questions, but rather to demonstrate the extent to which a political consensus in favor of amnesty and integration accompanied the early years of democracy in West Germany from 1949 to 1954.

His important book presents a detailed examination of the broad consensus within the postwar West German establishment in favor of amnesty and integration. In place of cynical cold warriors in Washington and London who were encouraging the impulse to forget the past, Frei underscores the persistent pressure that West German leaders, including prominent figures of the Protestant and Catholic churches, exerted (especially on American officials) to bring the process of denazification to an end and to grant amnesty to those already convicted. Since the publication in 1991 of Thomas Schwartz's excellent *America's Germany: John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany*, a part of the story of West German pressures on American officials in the early 1950s, seeking amnesty for convicted criminals and an end to further prosecutions, has been known to historians. With a minimum of theoretical fanfare, Frei fills in a more detailed picture of West German pressure in this direction.

The judicial reckoning of the Allies after the war was harsher and more extensive than is often assumed. Frei's contribution is to show that from 1949 to 1954, when democratically elected German politicians first had a chance to act, they passed "a series of parliamentary initiatives, legislative acts, and administrative decisions aimed at its vitiation." This *Vergangenheitspolitik*, or "politics for the past," lasted half a decade; and it rested on "a high degree of societal acceptance—indeed of collective expectation." At stake was "both an annulment of punishments and integrative measures on behalf of an army of millions of Nazi Party members," Frei writes. "Virtually without exception, these people regained their social, professional, and civic, but not their political status," which they had lost in the course of denazification and internment after the war. These millions of hopefully disillusioned but hardly guiltless Nazis were granted the opportunity offered by amnesty and integration, while an increasingly small group of ideologically committed Nazis and individuals whose deeds were especially monstrous and widely known were declared beyond the pale. Amnesty and integration for most, demarcation for the unreconstructed few: this was the formula that linked anti-Nazism and amnesia in the crucial early years.

Frei documents the spirit of the time in many debates in the West German parliament. There the word "victim" often referred not to people who were persecuted and murdered by the Nazis, but to people who were considered to be "victims" of Nazism's overcoming—that is, previously dismissed officials and fellow travelers. The West Germans invented a new word for such people: *Entnazifizierungsgeschädigten*, "those damaged by denazification." The term included tens of thousands of persons formerly interned in American, British, and French prisons between 1945 and 1949, when the West German state was founded. Most of them were war criminals indicted and convicted by the Western Allies, along with Nazi criminals condemned in German courts. Judged by their reaction to these measures, other West Germans felt a general burden of wartime guilt lifted, and so, writes Frei, "those who had never personally been held accountable could consider themselves symbolically exonerated." For such persons, breaking with the past meant breaking not with Nazism but with denazification, and fostering "a historical myopia unintentionally aggravated by the war crimes trials." The result was "a triumph of silence," which was broken in waves from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Frei skillfully details the actions, public and private, of an amnesty lobby composed of leading religious figures, a network of attorneys (many of whom served as lawyers for defendants at Nuremberg and other occupation-era trials), and former soldiers and officials of the Nazi regime, as well as the response of political parties, government officials, and the media. The result is a moderate revision of some widespread notions about the relationships between the Allies and the West Germans in the years after the war. One of the romantic notions of the New Left in West Germany was its belief that the United States and its anti-Soviet policy bore primary responsibility for preventing a timely anti-Nazi reckoning. Frei acknowledges that the Western Allies gave the West Germans permission to proceed with amnesty and integration; but in many cases "the Allies rejected past political measures desired by the Germans as exceeding the reasonable or acceptable," in particular concerning demands to pardon convicted war criminals. So while Frei takes into full consideration the leniency that characterized the reversal of international fronts from World War II to the Cold War, he gives even more attention to the continuing pressure on the Allies that was exerted by a depressingly broad spectrum of opinion in Adenauer's Germany—including the leading officials of the Protestant and Catholic churches—to reverse or to ameliorate the results of the Nuremberg-trials period.

As of January 31, 1951, the amnesty legislation had benefited 792,176 people. They included people with six-month sentences, but also about 35,000 people with sentences of up to one year who were released on parole. Frei specifies that these figures include a bit more than 3,000 functionaries of the SA, the SS, and the Nazi Party who

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participated in dragging victims to jails and camps; 20,000 other Nazi perpetrators sentenced for "deeds against life" (presumably murder); 30,000 sentenced for causing bodily injury, and about 5,200 charged with "crimes and misdemeanors in office."

Support for these measures extended across the political spectrum. It included left-of-center Social Democrats who supported legislation for amnesty and integration to restore social peace. Frei writes that in these early years "not a single politician spoke up" to oppose amnesty as an infringement of the legal structures that the Allies created after the war in the wake of Nazi lawlessness. He argues that the legislation symbolized for the new democracy "a progressive delegitimation of prosecution of Nazi crimes" that encouraged yet more appeals for a "general amnesty" covering the worst sorts of crimes. Frei remarks upon "an almost universally shared conviction that the political purge imposed on the Germans by the occupation authorities had failed monstrously, was unjust in every respect, and needed to be ended as quickly as possible."

His case is impressive, but phrases such as "almost universally shared conviction" unfairly scant the minority of dissenters. Some of the Social Democratic politicians who supported the integration measures, such as Adolf Arndt and Carlo Schmid, soon emerged as persistent critics of the mentality of forgiving and forgetting, and as advocates of re-invigorated prosecutions. Theodor Heuss did indeed urge the American High Commissioner John J. McCloy to release Ernst von Weizsäcker, formerly the leading official of the Nazi Foreign Ministry. Yet Heuss also repeatedly took the unpopular stance in the early 1950s of speaking bluntly about the mass murder of the Jews, and the need for West Germans never to forget Nazi criminality and always to honor the leaders of the anti-Nazi resistance in Germany.

Frei's study underscores the power of small parties to "place the big parties in a no-win situation" regarding the politics about the past. On the one side stood a large group of moderates in the conservative Christian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party joined by the Center Party. They confronted "a phalanx of radicals" in the German Party and in the Free Democratic Party (FDP). The Free Democrats, associated in the public mind with liberals such as Heuss and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, suffered a very dark chapter of their history in these years. Former civil servants from the Nazi era and even unreconstructed former high-ranking Nazis were able for a while to make it the leading respectable force supporting the amnesty program. As the large parties needed the FDP as a coalition partner, and as Adenauer sought to dry up electoral support for a nationalist party to the right of the Christian Democratic Union, the advocates of amnesty and integration found themselves in a potent bargaining position. They made the most of it.

The amnesty advocates from the German Party (a party that was dissolved by the mid-1950s) expressed uninhibited nationalist sentiments. One Hans-Joachim von Merkatz, a delegate of the German Party, argued in a parliamentary meeting that denazification had "sources in foreign law" and that perhaps those touched by it should be entitled to financial compensation. August Martin Euler, a member of the FDP, said in 1950 that it was time to move away from measures taken "under the influence of the Morgenthau plan" and to "let the past be buried" so that the Germans could "face the danger from the East." Faced with the prospect of losing elections or of coalitions collapsing, the large parties appeased the small ones.

One of the most effective and deceptive tactics of the amnesty lobby was to claim that the Allied occupation trials amounted to an accusation of collective guilt. The amnesty lobby enjoyed a disturbing degree of success in obscuring distinctions among those accused of crimes during the Nazi era. By spreading the presumed guilt so broadly, those calling for amnesty managed to reduce the number of those "really guilty" to an absolute minimum in the public mind. Chancellor Adenauer, they charged, would not defend those "who were really guilty." Yet in February 1951 Adenauer asserted—as he had been asserting since the first year after the war—that "so long after the collapse of the National Socialist regime, the distinction between politically exonerated and nonincriminated persons should be ended." In a debate in the Bundestag in April 1951, he said that the percentage of the guilty was "so extraordinarily minimal and so extraordinarily small" that "there has been no breach in the honor of the former German Wehrmacht.... No one may reproach the career soldiers on account of their earlier activities and, so long as they are to be employed in public service, place them behind other applicants if they have the same personal and professional qualities. The chapter of collective guilt for militarists alongside activists and beneficiaries of the National Socialist regime must be ended, once and for all."

When Adenauer sent such signals, he was seeking to discourage a right-wing revolt; but Frei demonstrates that the result was to appease these same radicals and to give them hope that with acceptance of democratic norms almost all would be forgotten. Whether Adenauer failed to understand this or was cynically preaching to the converted, the fact was that the Allied prosecutions had not rested on accusations of collective guilt. They had focused, rather, on restoring individual responsibility. In making such assertions, Adenauer obscured the extent to which large numbers of individuals at various levels of the German military supported and enthusiastically implemented Nazi criminal policies.

The numbers of former Nazi officials able to return to government positions in West Germany as a result of the amnesty were daunting. By the summer of 1950, more than one-fourth of the section managers of new federal ministries were former Nazi Party members. By 1953, 30 percent of the positions in the national government, amounting to 15,000 jobs, were filled by

The Irises

The irises were so beautiful I had trouble
leaving. One day, one day it will be lonely
when people go. I wanted to linger a bit
longer among irises. Some white, some purple,
some pale blue. What can one say among
irises. One's speech grows dumb as they touch
the air. I wanted to linger a bit longer
among irises. The moment moves. Are you
ready? I think the body's a mansion
with two doors, one luminescent and open,
one dark and closed. I wanted to linger
a bit longer among irises. I felt something
opening into the room among our tangled
arms. One day, one day it will be lonely. Petals,
paper doors, walls, clouds. I wanted to,
you wanted to. That your desire may spill
into eternity, an impatience whose lingering is all.

MARK IRWIN

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persons who benefited from Article 131, which gave pension rights to officials who had served in the Nazi regime. Specifically, 40 percent of the Foreign Ministry, 42 percent of the Interior (i.e., Justice) Ministry, and 75 percent of the ministry dealing with Germans who had fled from Eastern Europe during or after the war were former officials of the Nazi government. Faced with Social Democratic anger and parliamentary investigations of the prevalence of former Nazi officials in the Foreign Ministry, Adenauer argued that their expertise made them essential. "I think we now need to finish with this sniffing out of Nazis," he said.

In such an atmosphere, not surprisingly, the number of prosecutions of Nazi-era crimes declined. The Bundestag passed a second amnesty law in 1954, which benefited those whose possible prison sentence would have been three years or less. The passage of the law strained the limits of consensus among the major parties to the breaking point. By 1955, the SPD parliamentarian Walter Menzel regretfully noted that "through this amnesty, all those who had so murderously and bestially assaulted helpless and defenseless people before 1945 were pardoned, so long as no more than three years in prison were to be expected. This is what most deeply wounds our sense of justice: that individuals were treated so differently and unequally before the courts."

BUT NO COLLECTION OF CONtemporary statements is quite as revolting as the sanctimonious cynicism that passed for religious leadership in those years. In May 1948, Protestant leaders wrote to General Lucius Clay, the commander of American forces in Europe, to say that the occupation-era trials of Nazi war crimes eroded trust in law and justice. "The love of Christ" urged them to call for an end to prosecutions and for amnesty for those convicted. Charles Lafollette, director of the American military government in Baden-Wurtenberg, rejected their request, observing that "we cannot forget that the Protestant Church of Germany was always the State Church of Prussia"; he boldly drew connections between these past links and "this sudden rushing of the Church to the defense of those with whom it had such close ties in the past." Clay responded that "it is difficult to understand how any review of the evidence of those yet to be sentenced could provide a basis for sentimental sympathy for those who brought suffering and anguish to untold millions." When church leaders protested against the Allied executions of men guilty of mass murder, one Social Democratic politician asked why the churches, which said nothing while the murders were taking place, now sought to protect "those who committed murder and other crimes."

Veterans organizations made thinly veiled threats that, in the absence of amnesty, the Federal Republic would find it hard to field an army loyal to the new state. In 1950, one of the editorialists of the center-right *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* considered it "natural" that professional soldiers never inwardly accepted the Allies' war-criminal trial judgments. The political establishment rallied around the idea of the "honor" of the German soldier, which was said to have survived the Nazi era intact. One result, which was not to be undone until the historical scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s, was the persistence of the myth that the German military was not deeply implicated in the regime's crimes, or that it was an unwilling tool of a small number of Nazi decision-makers. As a result of the pressures for amnesty, the French and the British had emptied their prisons of Germans convicted of war crimes, and the United States did the same in 1958. Those released included doctors who were involved in experimentation on human beings and members of the SS who were active in mobile killing units.

By the middle of the 1950s, the combined impact of the Cold War, West German re-armament, and the integration of the FRG into the Western Alliance with "endogenous processes," together with "determined German resistance to the legal efforts nigh from the beginning," brought the era of denazification to an end. Frei, drawing on a consensus of historians of the occupation era, agrees that denazification was not, as was often bitterly assumed, a complete failure. Many thousands of Nazi officials had been in prison for a decade. The trials of the occupation era and the first years of the Federal Republic made an indispensable contribution to the public confrontation with the truth about Nazi criminality, and also offered voluminous material for subsequent historical scholarship. Indeed, the fact that the trials brought terrible deeds to public attention "also comprised the deeper ground for the massive collective resistance that faced the Allies." In light of the breadth of opposition to the trials, Frei writes that the "Volksgemeinschaft thus received a second confirmation," and "open, self-critical debate" about the Nazi past "basically evaporated over a long period."

The support for amnesty and integration in the West German establishment went so far that it failed to recognize and to act against the danger of a Nazi revival. In January 1953, British security officials arrested Werner Naumann, formerly a key aide to Joseph Goebbels in the Ministry of Propaganda, and five other former members of the Nazi Party on charges that they were aiming at a Nazi "recapture of power in Germany" by means of infiltration and then domination of the FDP. Even though Thomas Dehler, an FDP member, was the minister of justice, the West German government had failed to grasp the full dimensions of the threat that Naumann and his collaborators posed. It was left to the responsible British official, Ivone Kirkpatrick, to arrest Naumann and his associates and to put an end to Nazi intrigue in West German politics. In recalling this episode in detail, Frei underscores one of his central themes: that from Clay to McCloy and then Kirkpatrick, American and British officials, faced with continued West German reluctance to push ahead with denazification, played a crucial role in preserving the increasingly unpopular accomplishments of the war crimes trials and in preventing a political comeback of Nazism and right-wing radicalism. In Frei's words, "Without the permanent intervention of the Allies the risk of an organizational merging of nationalist and Nazi political currents would have been far greater."

ONE MIGHT THINK THAT AFTER accumulating such an indictment of the consensus of the West German establishment in the formative years, Frei would take issue with those who argue that it all turned out for the best because the repressed eventually returned and West Germany gradually faced its demons from the 1960s on. Surprisingly, he concludes instead with the irony that "the emergence in West German society of a serious and open confrontation with the Nazi past was made possible only by a very different preceding period—a period of utmost individual leniency, reflecting a policy for the past whose failing would stamp the new state's spirit over many decades." In coming to this conclusion, Frei goes beyond the weight of his evidence. Yes, democracy came to West Germany in a wave of convenient amnesia and premature amnesty. But this does not mean that democratization had to arrive in precisely this way. Nor does it mean that early silence was necessary for eventual memory and renewed judicial reckoning. The Allies could

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have decided to give the West Germans less sovereignty over these issues. An early and full disclosure of the depths of involvement in the crimes of the Third Reich might have placed a new democracy on even firmer grounds, and trials with witnesses whose memories were fresh would surely have brought a far greater number of perpetrators to justice. The temporal correlation of amnesty and integration with democratization does not establish a causal connection.

As Frei acknowledges, the price of justice delayed was high, for the moral and political legitimacy of the Federal Republic and for the prospects for a successful judicial reckoning. Frei has done a great service in documenting the depth and the breadth of indigenous West German opposition to bringing the criminals of the Nazi era to justice and to forcing compromised elites out of positions of responsibility in the crucial early years. A majority in favor of avoidance trumped a minority seeking truth and justice. Still, a different path to democracy in West Germany, and a better path, was conceivable. Politicians found it easy to rationalize the path of least resistance and to appease minorities who succeeded in convincing a majority that their own guilt was in fact collectively shared and thus collectively relieved by premature amnesty. While the United States and Britain put a brake on the drive to amnesty, the Cold War and West Germany's enlistment in it shifted American priorities in ways that gave more opportunities for the forgetting of the past. As this bold and uncompromising study demonstrates, the early expression of popular will did indeed frustrate efforts at memory and justice in the early years. But surely democracy and sovereignty and peace, in West Germany and elsewhere, need not be enemies of an honest reckoning with the crimes of the past. ■

John Banville
Blastings

PUSHKIN'S CHILDREN:
WRITING ON RUSSIA AND RUSSIANS
By Tatyana Tolstaya
Translated by Jamey Gambrell
(Mariner Books, 242 pp., $15)

THE SLYNX
By Tatyana Tolstaya
Translated by Jamey Gambrell
(Houghton Mifflin, 278 pp., $24)

TATYANA TOLSTAYA IS AN angry woman. She is angry at Gorbachev, she is angry at Yeltsin, she is positively furious with Solzhenitsyn, and she is not too pleased with Putin. The things that have happened to her country over the past hundred years make her blood boil. There are the great calamities, particularly Stalinism and all that it wrought, against which she rails in her essays; but, as with all good writers, it is in the details that she is her most telling. Returning from America to St. Petersburg in 1997, she notices that the metal balconies have disappeared from the building across the street, which had once been so beautiful. Wondering what happened, she is told that one of the balconies had fallen and killed a passerby, and since the city authorities had no money to spend on repairs, they had ordered that the rest of the balconies be torn down.

Balconies, of course, are the least of it. Tolstaya's real fury is reserved for the plight of the Russian people, betrayed over and over again by their so-called leaders, the czars, and the commissars, Lenin and Stalin, and their faceless henchmen who could always be depended upon to inform, to persecute, to tap telephones, to make midnight arrests, to run labor camps, to murder millions. Yet she is candid regarding how such horrors could have happened in her country. Reviewing an updated version of Robert Conquest's *The Great Terror*, an account of state crimes in the Stalinist years, Tolstaya sketches the process by which in Stalin's time Russian society, "intoxicated by the feeling that everything was allowed," first destroyed all that was "alien" and then, when things to destroy began to run out, turned inward and set to devouring itself. "Without popular support Stalin and his cannibals wouldn't have lasted for long. The executioner's genius expressed itself in his ability to feel and direct the evil forces slumbering in the people."

That was how; the question remains why. Tolstaya despairs of an answer. She recalls her first English teacher, a Russian immigrant who had married an American and, believing in the Communist dream, returned with him to Russia in the 1930s. Both were immediately arrested and sent to prison, where the husband perished. The woman had screamed at the investigator that she was not guilty of anything. His reply was that no one brought before him was guilty of anything. "But why, then?" "Just because," came the answer. Reading this, I recalled the great Czech scholar Eduard Goldstücker telling me that when he was arrested by the secret police in Prague in 1951 he inquired what charge was to be brought against him, to which the reply, accompanied by an ironic smile, was, "That is what you will tell us."

AS HER SURNAME INDICATES, Tatyana Tolstaya comes from a literary family. She counts among her forebears not only the great Leo but also Alexei Tolstoy. Her maternal grandfather was a translator of Shakespeare, Dante, and Lope de Vega, and her father was a noted scholar. As Alma Guillermoprieto writes in her introduction to *Pushkin's Children*, Tolstaya's collection of essays, "the near-sacred family name shielded its members from terror" during the Stalin era, and Tatyana grew up in relative luxury in her parents' book-filled apartment. Still, political paranoia was as thoroughly inculcated in her as in any other child of those dreadful years. In "Lies I Lived," a chilling fragment of memoir at the end of *Pushkin's Children*, she recalls how when she was eight she was playing outside her home when an old couple approached her and asked the way to the Botanical Gardens. Identifying them as surely belonging to the "enemies" against whom the state was constantly warning its citizens, she promptly sent them off in the wrong direction. As she watched the pair shuffle painfully away, however, enlightenment burst upon her.

> I felt an acute surge of shame. Suddenly, in one overwhelming moment—a moment I shall never forget—the truth was revealed to me. This was knowledge that comes in an instant, without words; complete knowledge, clear, indisputable, the kind of moral knowledge that requires no questions or explanations, the kind of knowledge that transforms an ape into a human being. . . . And at that moment,

John Banville's new novel, SHROUD, *will be published this month by Knopf.*

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burning with shame, I swore a silent oath: Never.

In *Pushkin's Children*, Tolstaya excoriates her fellow countrymen for their "blind, superstitious belief in the spoken, and especially in the written, word." In the title essay, however, a compressed but brilliant account of the effects of the fall of communism on Russian literature and its readers, she observes that after 1989 "the word, which had seemed unique and rare, was published in editions of millions and lost its magical qualities. The reader, elated at first, was eventually overwhelmed and then disappointed.... Everything was lost, everything was desacralized in one fell swoop." One wonders if Pushkin himself has suffered under this process of desacralization, that Pushkin for whom "after his death admiration... grew and grew until he himself became, for many Russians, God, tsar, and the People, an idol, an icon, holy writ." Tolstaya reveres Pushkin precisely because he stood above the "flat, pragmatic point of view" of the majority of Russian writers before and after him, who saw themselves as oracles and who "used the power of their words to address the most important social and political problems of their day."

IN *THE SLYNX*, A FICTION SET IN A dystopic future, Pushkin has become the idol of the tribe, "our be all and end all"; carved wooden "pushkins" are set up at doorposts and crossroads, and at the end of the book a tribal elder, condemned to the pyre, is tied aloft to one of these totems as the flames leap under him. In the introduction to *Pushkin's Children*, Guillermoprieto remarks, with somewhat shaky grammar, that "although Tolstaya comes down squarely on the side of creative freedom, it is as a chronicler of political events that her own words catch fire." This is faint praise for a writer who has produced two previous works of fiction and, simultaneously with *Pushkin's Children*, her first novel. The books are certainly a pair, each helping to elucidate the other.

The Slynx is a difficult work to categorize. The jacket blurb calls it a "rollicking satirical novel," but while it certainly does rollick, and there is a lot of obvious satire, this description seems both inadequate and overblown. The book is set at an uncertain point in the future, a couple of hundred years after "the Blast," when Russia has entered a new Dark Ages. The wheel has been re-invented, mice are the chief source of food and clothing and candle wax, and a dwarf czar called "Fyodor Kuzmich, Glorybe" is in power. Things could be worse: "after all," a character remarks, "we're in the Neolithic period, and not some savage animal kingdom." The hero of the tale is a young man, Benedikt Karpich, "the late Karp Pudich's son, who was the son of Pud Christoforovich, who was the son of Christopher Matveich, and whose son that Matvei was and where from—we can't remember, it's been lost in the gloom of time."

Benedikt is a vigorous chap, none too bright, remarkable only for a consuming obsession with books; Dostoevsky would have recognized him, and Tolstaya's great-granduncle would have preached him a sermon. He lives in the town of Fyodor-Kuzmichsk—yes, confusingly named, it would seem, after the undersized czar, or vice versa—around which are "boundless fields, unknown lands. To the north are deep forests, full of storm-felled trees, the branches so twisted you can't get through." In these forests lives the fabled Slynx, which "sits on dark branches and howls a wild, sad howl.... If you wander into the forest it jumps on your neck from behind: hop! It grabs your spine in its teeth—*crunch*—and picks out the main vein with its claw and breaks it. All the reason runs right out of you. If you come back, you're never the same again."

The Blast has created genetic chaos among the people, or Golubchiks—there is a rather perfunctory glossary at the beginning of the book—who display grotesque Consequences: one character has ears under his armpits, another has grown cock's combs all over her body, while Benedikt has, for a time at least, a little tail. The Consequence for some who survived the Blast, the Oldeners, is that they are still alive, centenarians many times over. Nikita Ivanich, the Head Stoker, is an Oldener, and not only is he seemingly immortal, he is also a sort of human dragon who can breathe blasts of flame—a handy knack, as it happens, for his job is to keep the town's stoves lit.

Benedikt marries into the family of Kudeyar Kudeyarich, the chief Saniturion of Fyodor-Kuzmichsk. Kudeyar, his wife, and his daughter Olenka, Benedikt's bride, all have claws on their feet, and incessantly scrape the floors—one of the more grisly leitmotifs of the novel is the little woolly piles of wood shavings that the Kudeyariches leave all over the house. We are not told exactly what a Saniturion does, and it is probably better that we do not know, but Kudeyarich's tasks include winkling illicit books out of the more literate inhabitants of the town. Kudeyarich enlists Benedikt as his lieutenant in this task, supplying him with a useful and deadly double-sided hook meant to be used to snag books and haul them out of their hiding places, but which inevitably ends up gutting more than one resistant book-lover. In the end, Kudeyarich and Benedikt together stage a comical, messy, and murderous coup and set up a farcical people's state, with Kudeyarich as leader and Benedikt the deputy for marine and oceanic defense. The Bright Past has come again.

It is impossible to communicate adequately the richness, the exuberance, and the horrid inventiveness of this book. It must have been a nightmare to translate, and Jamey Gambrell has done a heroic job. Since the Blast, the Russian language has been in a process of decay, and in the translation a kind of Jabberwocky patters throughout the narrative: mushrooms have become marshrooms, worms are worrums, and the Renaissance has deliquesced into runnysauce. Scraps of poetry are strewn through the pages, everything from Lermontov and (of course) Pushkin to Russian nonsense verse and Schiller's "Ode to Joy."

Despite all the energy and all the excitement, however, *The Slynx* is hard to love. As in most allegorical and futuristic novels, including *1984* and *Brave New World*, the characters are robbed of substance by the bizarreries amongst which they must move and conduct their fitful lives. We simply do not care enough about these unfortunates, maimed and malformed as they are. Even Benedikt engages neither our full sympathy nor our full reprehension. As for the satire, one is required to be familiar with more than any Westerner could possibly know about the minutiae of Russian history and contemporary Russian life. Consider this exchange:

> "You sing so well!" said Nikita Ivanich comfortingly. "Did you study or is it just natural? Does it run in your family?"
>
> "Probably... Papa was a dentist," sniffed Lev Lvovich one last time. "And on my mother's side I'm from the Kuban."

Yes, one gets the hoary old gag about the dentist—but the Kuban?

Reading *The Slynx* is rather like finding oneself attending a theatrical performance in a foreign city where one knows the language but simply cannot get the jokes or the slang or the references. There are pages in Tatyana Tolstaya's novel that no doubt will have them splitting their sides in Moscow and St. Petersburg, but they will leave the Western reader glum and stony-faced, wondering what all the laughter is about. ■

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SAFWAN DIARIST

Fault Line

NADUM HASSAN SHUFFLES in barefoot and sniffling, folds his tiny body into a ball, and stares down relentlessly. He will not look at strangers, and I find it difficult to look at him. Nadum is ten, and his face seems to be falling off. His skin is mottled and blackened, pieces flaking as if he had just emerged from a fire. Nadum rarely leaves his room, as sunlight causes him intense pain. "He can't go into the sunlight. He's losing his sight," Nadum's father, Mashun Hassan, explained as he glanced at his son huddled in the corner.

FOR AS LONG AS NADUM HAS BEEN SICK, Iraq has told his family the United States is to blame. The depleted uranium (D.U.) in U.S. munitions used during the Gulf war, Baghdad says, affected his father, resulting in Nadum's cancer. Indeed, Iraq claims the detritus of D.U. munitions have led to an explosion of cancer, birth defects, and liver disease across the country. The United States says that no evidence has linked D.U. to these illnesses reported in Iraq. And outside doctors find it implausible that D.U. is responsible for the boy's condition. But, on the eve of another possible war, science matters less than belief in places like Safwan, the dusty town on Iraq's southern border where Norman Schwarzkopf brokered the cease-fire ending the Gulf war.

WHETHER OR NOT IRAQIS' BODIES HAVE been poisoned, their minds have been. Saddam Hussein's government has wasted no effort promoting stories of the horrors. "It was they who brought cancer through, ... their depleted uranium, which they used against us," Saddam fulminated in a speech last year. Baghdad regularly sends complaints about D.U. to international agencies and has even issued a postage stamp with a picture of a deformed child purportedly afflicted by uranium. The state-run Iraqi News Agency maintains on its Internet site a link to "Another DU Victim" that takes viewers to a picture of a grossly misshapen child. Foreign diplomats and peace activists are regularly taken on tours of cancer wards to highlight the issue. And, after more than a decade of propaganda, it has become an article of faith among Iraqis that the Americans have poisoned the civilian population. "This is terrorism," Nadum's father, a farmer who has sold many of his belongings to pay for the boy's cancer treatments, told me. "He's a victim of American aggression."

IF AMERICAN SOLDIERS EXPECT TICKER-tape parades once they conquer Iraq, my visit to Safwan suggests that might be overly optimistic. Saddam's army may crumble, but the bitterness among many ordinary Iraqis will remain. Mashun Hassan certainly will not provide U.S. forces with a warm welcome. "At night, I don't sleep because I stay with [my son]," he told me. "I even sold the roof of this house to spend the money on him. I was forced to borrow from friends and ask them to help. I sold my car. I only sleep during the day." Mashun Hassan's mind is made up about the American soldiers who may cross into Iraq a few miles from his house. "They're killing women and old men and children, and we expect that America will certainly make more war."

IT IS NOT JUST D.U. THAT SEEMS TO have soured America's reputation within Iraq. While they may have been eager to see American troops in 1991, today many Iraqis blame the United States as much as Saddam for their woes. The Kurds and the Shia remember being abandoned by the first Bush administration. And economic sanctions have transformed Iraq into a beggar state. Medicine, spare parts, and even tires are hard to find. Doctors have reported patients dying because hospital vehicles were broken and could not retrieve oxygen from across town. With water-treatment facilities still in woeful condition, disease has spread virtually unchecked. Malnutrition remains a major problem, and the Iraqi government blames sanctions for the deaths of 1.7 million children over the last decade. For most of those children, there is a resentful family.

PREDICTING HOW IRAQIS REALLY FEEL about anything, of course, remains a hazardous affair. Official minders carefully monitor most interviews by journalists in Iraq, though I managed to conduct several interviews without government guides. Away from the minders, some Iraqis clearly hold Saddam responsible for bringing misery on their country. "Believe me, I hate my government," one Iraqi confided to me. "Saddam is a crazy man. Not only me, a lot of Iraqis think so, but we can't say it." But animosity toward Saddam should not be interpreted as automatic goodwill toward the United States. Struggling to make ends meet and influenced by propaganda like the uranium stories, many Iraqis buy the government line that the United States is threatening war either to punish Muslims or to gain access to oil. "The American hostility was not revealed until just recently," complained one Iraqi businessman. "They're saying they're advocates of human rights, but they're the ones violating our human rights."

IRAQI HOSTILITY COMES THROUGH particularly strongly in the south, where U.S. and British warplanes bomb targets in response to provocative actions by the Iraqi military in the "no-fly" zone. Many Iraqis in the southern no-fly zone have grown angry as U.S. and British warplanes have increasingly bombed targets, sometimes hitting civilians by mistake. Although there are no reliable numbers of civilian casualties, Iraqis claim that there have been hundreds over the years. While American pilots studiously try to avoid nonmilitary targets, it's clear that at least some civilians have been hurt. "It's normal that we get bombs from Americans," said Mesa Ali, 25, a young mother who lives near an oil company in Basra that was bombed in December, possibly because radar or anti-aircraft systems were illegally parked in the compound. Her young son was covered by shards of glass when her front window blew in. Iraqis who have been wounded by these bombings narrow their eyes suspiciously at American journalists. Watheka Raheen Feyad, 25, was working at this Basra oil company when an explosion ripped her body, leaving shrapnel in her head and her leg badly shredded. When I offered sympathy for her plight, she snapped, "What can I do with your sorrow?" The danger for American troops is that other Iraqis will greet them the same way.

PETER BAKER

Peter Baker is a foreign correspondent for THE WASHINGTON POST.

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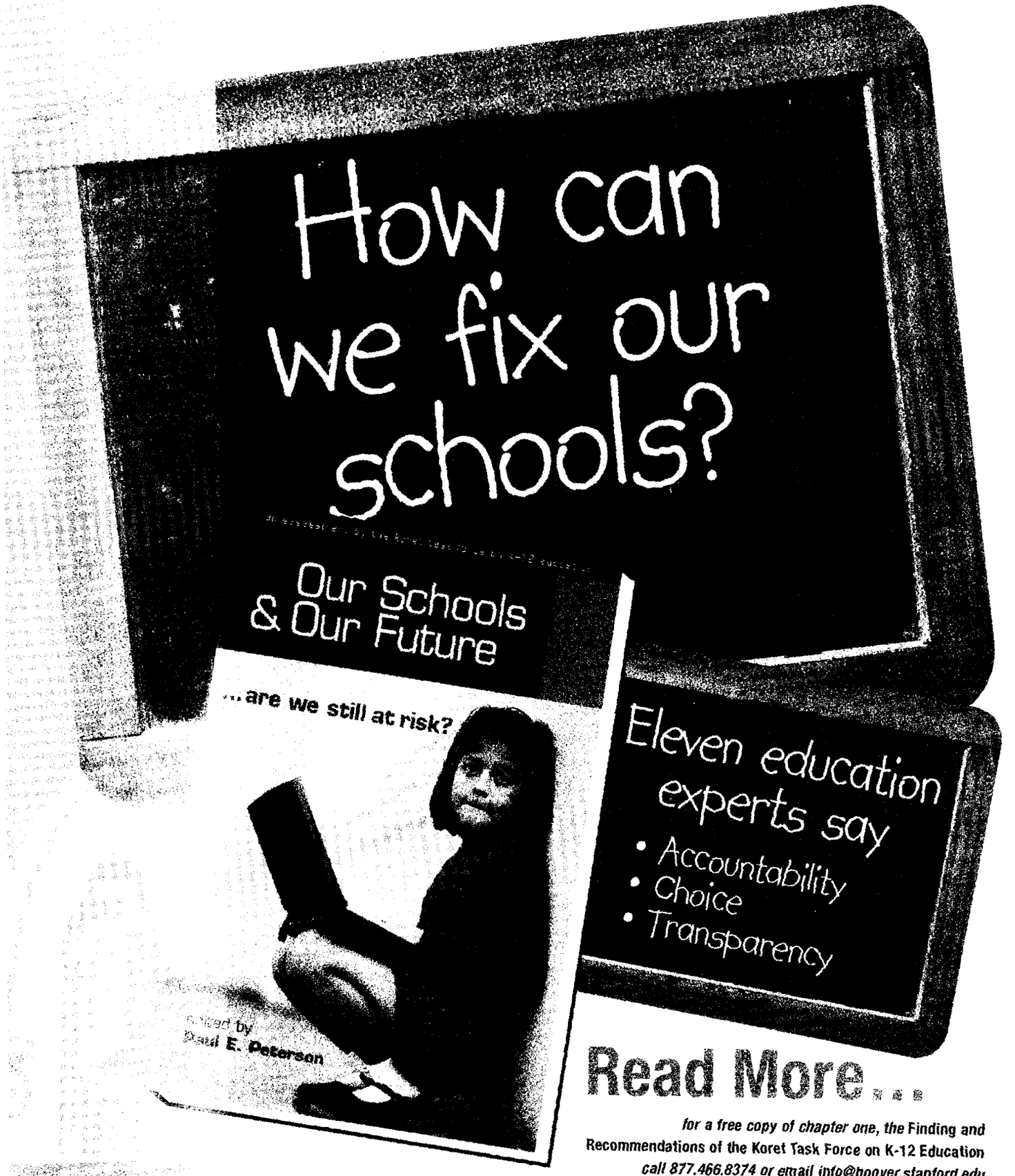

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